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ABSTRACT

In January 1986, the Texas State Board of Education established performance standards for the Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers (TECAT), an examination resulting from the passage in 1984 of Texas House Bill 72. This Bill called for Texas public school educators to pass a test in reading and writing as a condition of continued certification. The TECAT includes questions about selected readings (details, sequences, main ideas, and facts versus opinions found in the readings); knowledge of job-related vocabulary; reference usage; inference skills; writing mechanics; sentence formation; English usage; and composition. This document is comprised of three separate TECAT booklets that have been combined: (1) Study Guide, (2) Passing Standards, and (3) Skills Review Manual. The Study Guide is designed to prepare those who will be taking the TECAT, and it includes practice tests. Passing Standards for the TECAT are described for the reading section and the multiple choice and composition writing tests. The Skills Review Manual was prepared for Texas educators planning to retake the reading and/or writing sections of the TECAT. Practice tests are included for the retest. (SLD)

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TEXAS EXAMINATION OF CURRENT ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

STUDY GUIDE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TECAT

Texas Education Agency

1985

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INTRODUCTION

This study guide has been prepared for individuals who will be taking the *Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers* (TECAT). It is organized into three parts. First, a brief description of the **test procedures** (Part I) is provided in the form of answers to frequently asked questions about the TECAT. Second, a **test content** section (Part II) provides a detailed description of the types of test items that are used to assess the skills measured on the TECAT as well as a detailed analysis of a sample item for each type of question. Finally, a 46-item **practice test** (Part III) is included for those who wish to test themselves on each of the TECAT skills. An answer key is provided at the end of the practice test. You may prefer to take the practice test without any review/preparation for the TECAT skills to help you decide what skills to study. You might also decide to prepare for the skills described in Section II, then take the practice test to check on how effective your studying has been.

Only you can decide how best to use the study guide to meet your needs. Whatever approach you use with this study guide, be certain to read it carefully before you take the TECAT.

PART I
TEST PROCEDURES

WHY IS THIS TEST REQUIRED?

In the summer of 1984, the sixty-eighth Texas Legislature enacted House Bill 72, which calls for Texas public school educators to pass a test in reading and writing as a condition for continued certification.

WHO SHOULD TAKE THE TEST?

In general, all persons holding a Texas teacher certificate who want to be employed in public education must take the test. More specifically, all persons issued a valid Texas certificate prior to February 1, 1986, must perform satisfactorily to continue certification and be eligible for employment after June 30, 1986. This includes all degreed and non-degreed teachers, administrators, counselors, supervisors and librarians.

WHEN WILL THE TEST BE GIVEN?

During 1986, two opportunities to take the test will be provided at state expense for certified educators employed in public education. The TECAT will be administered for the first time on March 10, 1986 to persons employed in the 1985-86 school year. Anyone failing to pass on that date will be scheduled for a retake on Saturday, June 28, 1986. In addition, the test will be given for a fee of $30.00 to persons certified but not employed in public education. This schedule of open administrations will begin in Spring, 1986.

WHERE WILL THE TEST BE GIVEN?

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has made arrangements for test sites in each county, except Loving County, for the March 10 administration. For other administrations, the actual number and location of these sites will depend upon the number of individuals who will be taking the TECAT on a given occasion. In all cases, examinees will be assigned to the nearest site.

WHAT KIND OF A TEST IS THE TECAT?

The TECAT is a test designed to measure key reading and writing skills needed by public school educators. It was developed for TEA by IOX Assessment Associates in Culver City, California. The TECAT is a criterion-referenced test of reading and writing skills. It is designed to measure an individual's mastery of particular skills rather than to compare examinees based on their test performances. It is composed of both multiple-choice items and a composition assignment. A complete description of the test content is provided in the next part of this study guide.

WHO WILL SCORE THE TEST?

All TECAT scoring will be supervised by National Computer Systems (NCS) of Iowa City, Iowa. NCS will score all multiple-choice sections of the test. The composition will be scored by Measurement Incorporated of Durham, North Carolina. All compositions will be independently scored by two experienced, trained, and certified scorers using carefully established scoring criteria. Discrepancies between the first two readers will be resolved by a third reader. Diagnostic feedback regarding the types of errors made will be included in the score reports to examinees for the portions of the examination not passed.

HOW WILL PASSING STANDARDS BE SET?

The Texas State Board of Education will establish acceptable levels of performance on both the reading and writing sections of the TECAT prior to the initial administration of the test. In establishing appropriate passing standards, board members will consider, among other factors, (1) the recommendations of approximately 1,000 Texas educators and citizens who will have reviewed potential TECAT test items and (2) the performance of a stratified random sample of approximately 5,000 Texas educators on a field-test of potential TECAT test items.

WHO WILL RECEIVE A REPORT OF PASSING STATUS?

Notification of passing status will be provided by National Computer Systems (NCS) to the individual examinee (by direct mail) and the Division of Teacher Certification of the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The method of notifying district officials will be decided considering all available means of maximizing confidentiality.

WILL SPECIAL PROVISIONS BE MADE FOR HANDICAPPED EXAMINEES?

Special provisions will be made for handicapped examinees who are not able to take the test under standard conditions. See the INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE TECAT REGISTRATION FORM for details.

WILL SPECIAL PROVISIONS BE MADE FOR EXAMINEES WITH RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS?

An alternate test date will be made for those individuals whose religious convictions prohibit their taking the test on a scheduled date. Requests for an alternate date must be submitted in writing by the examinee to NCS at least 30 days prior to the scheduled test date. All such requests must be accompanied by a confirming letter from the examinee's minister, rabbi, etc.

PART II
TEST CONTENT

The TECAT is composed of two sections, reading and writing. The reading section consists of 55 multiple-choice items. The writing section has two parts. The first part consists of 30 multiple-choice items. The second part calls for examinees to write a short composition.

READING

The following skills will be measured on the reading section of the TECAT:

- Detail (10 items)
- Main Idea (10 items)
- Job-Related Vocabulary (10 items)
- Fact and Opinion (10 items)
- Reference Usage (10 items)
- Inference (5 items)

To assess these skills, reading selections or other displays (for example, class schedules) similar to those that Texas educators may encounter while engaging in their professional responsibilities will be presented. Most selections will range in length from 50 to 200 words. The selections will be drawn from any of the following types of materials:

— educationally relevant professional journals;
— memoranda from administrators, counselors, librarians, or teachers;
— local school board policy statements;
— college-level textbooks dealing with curriculum, instruction, measurement, or educational psychology;
— educationally relevant articles/editorials from magazines/newspapers;
— teachers' manuals and guides to student textbooks; or
— student textbooks.

An introductory phrase, such as "Adapted from a student textbook," will designate the selection's source. Examinees will be asked to use the information **from the selection** to answer a question. Each question will be followed by a set of four answer choices.

WRITING
MULTIPLE-CHOICE

The following skills will be measured on the multiple-choice part of the writing section of the TECAT:

- Mechanics (10 items)
- Sentence Formation (10 items)
- English Usage (10 items)

To assess these skills, a brief communication typical of that which Texas educators might encounter while engaging in their professional responsibilities will be presented. Most communications will range in length from 50 to 100 words. The brief communications will be drawn from the following types of materials:

— memoranda/letters to parents;
— letters of recommendation;
— memoranda/letters to colleagues;
— letters to officials of community organizations or businesses;
— reports/articles about class, club, or school activities;
— entries on student records; or
— notes/assignments/feedback to students.

An introductory phrase, such as "Adapted from a letter to a parent," will designate the communication's source. Each question will be followed by a set of four answer choices. Examinees will be asked to determine whether an error exists in the communication and, if so, the location of the error.

COMPOSITION

The composition portion of the writing skills test will require examinees to compose a written response of approximately 150 words to **one** of two possible topics. The topics are designed to elicit a sample of formal writing that is relevant to the responsibilities of educators in Texas. The criteria on which compositions will be evaluated are explained later in this study guide. A detailed analysis of an acceptable and unacceptable response to a sample writing assignment is also presented.

TECAT READING SKILLS
DETAIL

Test items for this skill will require examinees to answer questions about details in a reading selection. The two types of detail items will be **specifics** and **sequence** questions.

SPECIFICS

Sample Item

Adapted from an instructional materials catalogue:

Learning Staircase assesses 12 areas considered important for a young child's effective functioning in the classroom. The program can be used to identify specific deficiencies and to prescribe training tasks within each area. Related areas are grouped as modules. The first module measures listening skills and memory. Fine motor and gross motor skills are measured in the second module. Classification, colors, sequence, and time are considered in the third module. The fourth module covers preverbal ability and verbal expression. Spatial relationships and visual memory are assessed in the fifth module. Each module consists of 20 to 40 separate tasks.

According to this selection, which of the following areas is measured in the second module?

A fine motor skills

B number concepts

C verbal comprehension

D visual memory

Test Questions

Specifics items will consist of a reading selection that includes several details. Each selection will be followed by a question that begins with the phrase, "According to this selection," and asks about a detail in the selection.

The question will ask about one of the following details: **who, what, when, where, how, how much, how many, why,** or **which.** The specific detail needed to answer the question will be a piece of information such as a name, an object, a location, a time, a characteristic, or a quantity.

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be the detail from the selection that correctly answers the question. This detail may be stated exactly as it appears in the selection (restated) or may be expressed using slightly different words than were used in the selection (paraphrased).

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

- — **Incorrect:** An accurate description of a detail that is contained in the reading selection but does not answer the question.
- — **Inaccurate:** A detail from the reading selection that has been changed.
- — **Irrelevant:** A detail that is not contained in the reading selection.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice A: The fourth sentence of the reading selection states that, "Fine motor and gross motor skills are measured in the second module." Thus, this answer choice is correct.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice B: This answer choice is **irrelevant.** Number concepts are never mentioned in the reading selection.

Choice C: This **inaccurate** detail has been changed from a detail that was mentioned in the selection. Specifically, although it is not the correct answer, verbal expression is a detail contained in the reading selection. This detail was modified to verbal comprehension, hence is not correct.

Choice D: This detail is **incorrect** because it is drawn directly from the reading selection, but does not answer the question. Visual memory is assessed in the **fifth** module, not the **second** module.

SEQUENCE

Sample Item

Adapted from a teacher's manual:

This activity allows students to solve word problems using information from a map. Draw a large rectangle on the chalkboard. Draw a simple picture of a school in the upper left-hand corner and a grocery store in the upper right-hand corner. Next, draw a park in the lower left-hand corner and a house in the lower right-hand corner. Write "10 minutes" along each of the longer sides of the rectangle. Write "five minutes" along the shorter sides of the rectangle. Tell the students that it takes 10 minutes to walk from the school to the grocery store. Then, ask for other examples of walks that would take 10 minutes according to the map. Ask the students to tell you which walks would take five minutes. Finally, ask word problems such as, "How many minutes would it take to walk from the school to the house?"

According to this selection, what should the teacher do immediately before asking students for examples of 10-minute walks?

A Draw a map of a school, a park, a store, and a house on the blackboard.

B Prepare homework exercises that provide practice solving word problems using information from maps.

C Ask students how long it takes to walk from the school to the grocery store.

D Explain to students that it takes 10 minutes to walk from the school to the grocery store.

Test Questions

Sequence items will consist of a reading selection that presents a sequence of two or more steps. Each selection will be followed by a question that begins with the phrase, "According to this selection," and asks about a step in the selection.

The question item will require the examinee to identify what comes **first, last, immediately before,** or **immediately after** a given event.

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be the step (restated or paraphrased) from the selection that correctly answers the question.

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

- — **Incorrect:** An accurate description of a step that is contained in the reading selection but does not answer the question. For example, an incorrect answer choice might be the last step in a sequence when the question asks for the first step.
- — **Inaccurate:** A step from the reading selection that has been changed.
- — **Irrelevant:** A step that is not contained in the reading selection.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice D: The third sentence from the end of this selection suggests that teachers should ask for examples of 10-minute walks. The step that comes **immediately before** that step is described in the preceding sentence, "Tell the students that it takes 10 minutes to walk from the school to the grocery store." Therefore, choice D is correct.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: This **incorrect** answer consists of a step that is before, but not **immediately** before, the step in which the teacher asks for other examples of 10-minute walks.

Choice B: This step is **irrelevant** because the idea of homework is never discussed in the reading selection.

Choice C: This is an **inaccurate** step because it no longer matches a step that was described in the reading selection. The correct step involves the distance in walking time from the school to the grocery store. However, the teacher is supposed to **tell,** not **ask,** the students how long it would take to walk this distance.

MAIN IDEA

Test items for this skill will require examinees to select the best statement of the main idea of a reading selection.

Sample Item

Adapted from an education journal:

One way to make learning meaningful, enjoyable, and accessible to a greater number of students is team teaching. Many approaches to team teaching have been used. Perhaps the most successful approach has been to have teachers from different disciplines work together as a team. Units or entire courses could be team-taught, showing the relationships between, for example, art and geometry, mathematics and music, or foreign language and history. There are many possible combinations. Such a program could provide support and enrichment for students and teachers alike, creating a fertile, stimulating learning environment.

Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

A History and foreign language can be effectively taught together.

B Students and teachers can benefit from team-taught courses that combine subjects.

C It is impossible to teach two different subjects in one course, even with two teachers in the classroom.

D Team teaching is being used increasingly in public schools throughout the United States.

Test Questions

Main idea items will consist of a reading selection that communicates a single, central idea that is explicitly stated in one sentence or is implied by the selection as a whole. Each selection will be followed by the question, "Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?"

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be an accurate statement of the selection's main idea. It may be paraphrased or clearly implied by the selection.

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

— **Inappropriate in scope:**
  (1) **Too narrow:** A statement that does not account for all the important information in the reading selection.
  (2) **Too broad:** A statement that overgeneralizes beyond the information contained in the reading selection.

— **Inaccurate:** A statement that contradicts information in the reading selection.

— **Irrelevant:** A statement that introduces information not included in the reading selection.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice B: Every sentence in the item's reading selection relates to the concept of team teaching as a potentially useful teaching tool. The first sentence introduces the idea of the benefits of team teaching. The passage then describes what may be the most successful approach to team teaching, that is, combining the efforts of teachers from different disciplines in a single course. The reading selection closes with a sentence that indicates that both teachers and students can profit from team teaching. Therefore, choice B is the best statement of the main idea of the selection.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: This statement is **inappropriate in scope** because it is **too narrow.** Although the reading selection suggests that history and foreign language may be effectively combined, other combinations of courses are described as well. Moreover, this answer choice does not mention team teaching, the selection's central topic. Thus, this answer choice is merely a detail from the reading selection, not its main idea.

Choice C: This **inaccurate** statement contradicts information in the reading selection. The reading selection argues that teaching two different subjects in one course is extremely worthwhile—just the opposite of what is stated in the answer choice.

Choice D: This statement is **irrelevant** because the reading selection does not indicate whether there is an increase in the use of team teaching. Thus, this statement, although plausible, is not the selection's main idea.

JOB-RELATED VOCABULARY

Test items for this skill will require examinees to show that they understand the meaning of terms they may encounter while reading educationally relevant materials.

Sample Item

> Adapted from an article about school activities:
>
> Team teaching was used very effectively by teachers in the music department.

Which of the following is the best definition of team teaching as used above?

A forming classes based on student ability

B having more advanced students help less advanced students

C having two or more teachers teach a class together

D providing instruction to small groups of students

Test Questions

Job-related vocabulary items will consist of a brief reading selection that includes an underlined term. The selection will be followed by the question, "Which of the following is the best definition of (the underlined term) as used above?"

Although the underlined term will be used in a typical context, clues about its meaning will **not** be provided in the reading selection.

All of the words used for job-related vocabulary test items will be selected from the following list:

Ability grouping
Absenteeism
Accreditation
Achievement
Achievement tests
Aptitude
Aptitude tests
Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee
Assessment
Bilingual education
Classroom management
Certification
Compensatory education
Comprehension
Computer literacy
Continuing contract
Criterion
Criterion-referenced test
Curriculum
Diagnostic
Disadvantaged
Discipline management
Discovery learning
English as a Second Language (ESL)
Evaluation
Expel
Extracurricular
Extrinsic motivation
Feedback
Formative (evaluation)
Gifted and talented
Grade equivalent score
Guardian
Guided practice
Handicapped
Homebound instruction
Independent practice
Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)
Individualized instruction
In-school suspension
Inservice (education)
Instructional objective
Intrinsic motivation
Learning disability
Learning resources center (LRC)
Lecture method
Lesson plan
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
Mainstreaming
Mastery learning
Mean (average)
Modeling (behavioral and instructional)
Monitor (as a verb)
Multicultural
Normal curve
Norm-referenced test
Objective test
Pacing (instruction)
Peer tutor
Percentile
Posttest
Pretest
Probationary contract
Raw score
Readiness skill
Reinforcement
Remediation
Retention
Scope and sequence (of instruction)
Self concept
Self-paced (instruction)
Social promotion
Socioeconomic status
Special education
Standardized test
Summative (evaluation)
Suspension
Team teaching
Term contract
Time-on-task
Truancy
Vocational education

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be an appropriate definition of the underlined term as used in the reading selection.

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

- — **Incorrect:** A definition of a word on the vocabulary list other than the underlined term.
- — **Irrelevant:** A definition of a word not included on the vocabulary list.

The following sources can be consulted for definitions and examples of correct usage of the above terms:

- — college-level textbooks dealing with curriculum, instruction, measurement, or educational psychology; and
- — administration manuals for standardized tests.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice C: Because team teaching involves teachers sharing the instructional responsibilities for a class, this is the best definition of the term.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: This **incorrect** definition defines the vocabulary term **ability grouping.**

Choice B: This **incorrect** definition defines the vocabulary term **peer tutoring.**

Choice D: This **irrelevant** definition defines the term **small-group instruction,** which does not appear on the job-related vocabulary word list.

FACT AND OPINION

Test items for this skill will require examinees to distinguish between facts and opinions by correctly identifying either a fact or an opinion **presented in a reading selection.** Thus, the two types of fact and opinion items will be **identifying facts** and **identifying opinions** questions.

Facts are pieces of information that can be shown to be true through objective evidence. Opinions are individuals' judgments or beliefs. Opinions cannot be proven or disproven.

In answering questions for this skill, examinees must be certain that they select a fact or an opinion that appears **in the selection.** Other facts and opinions may be used as answer choices but will **not** be correct.

IDENTIFYING FACTS

Sample Item

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: Faculty
From: Sandra Rodriquez, Principal
Subject: Student Science Fair

A student science fair has been scheduled for Saturday, March 15. This fair is being sponsored by a local business association. Members of that association intend to set up, judge, and take down the displays. Please attend the fair, if possible, because it is important for teachers to show their support for this worthwhile project.

Please announce the fair to your students and encourage them to enter. Any student is eligible to participate. The entry forms and rules are available from our secretary, Mr. Mohan. We ask that you provide guidance to your students in selecting appropriate projects. Students may enter experiments or simple displays of collections, pictures, or models.

Please inform your students about the science fair this week so they will have adequate time to work on their projects. This is a great opportunity for our students to show their talents!

Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

A Entry forms need to be returned to Mr. Mohan by March 12 in order to enter an exhibit in the fair.

B The science fair is being sponsored by the school district.

C It is important for teachers to attend the science fair to show their support.

D Students are permitted to enter displays or experiments in the science fair.

Test Questions

Fact items will consist of a reading selection followed by the question, "Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?"

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be a fact that is stated **in the reading selection.**

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

— **Inaccurate Fact:** A statement presented as fact that is contradicted by information in the selection.

— **Irrelevant Fact:** A statement presented as a fact that introduces information not included in the reading selection.

— **Opinion:** A judgment or belief that contains at least one concept from the reading selection.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice D: This statement accurately restates a fact presented in the final sentence of the second paragraph of the reading selection. This sentence states that students may enter experiments or simple displays. Thus, choice D is correct.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: This statement is presented as a fact, but it is **irrelevant** because it is not stated in the selection. The third sentence of paragraph two states that the rules are available from Mr. Mohan. However, an exact deadline for entry is never given.

Choice B: This statement is **inaccurate** and, therefore, cannot be a fact from the reading selection. The second sentence of paragraph one reports that the fair will be sponsored by a **local business association,** not the school district.

Choice C: This statement appears in the reading selection, but it is an opinion, not a fact. Although the principal believes that participation in the fair is important, others may hold different beliefs or opinions.

IDENTIFYING OPINIONS

Sample Item

Adapted from a newspaper/magazine:

Encouraging parents to take an active interest in their children's education has become a priority in many schools. In response, a new program has been designed to stimulate parental involvement in schooling. The program, known as the Teacher-Parent Partnership Program, was carefully designed to meet the needs of the contemporary American family. The program consists of 10 skill-development activities that can be completed at home. The activities take little time, are not expensive, and do not duplicate school work. Rather, they reinforce school activities and, more importantly, actively involve parents in their children's learning. This involvement is a critical component of any successful educational program.

Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection?**

A The new Teacher-Parent Partnership Program has 10 activities for students and their parents.

B The needs of students seem to have changed considerably during the past few years.

C It is important for parents to be involved in their children's instructional program.

D The activities in the Teacher-Parent Partnership Program are quite costly.

Test Questions

Opinion items will consist of a reading selection followed by the question, "Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?"

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be an opinion that is stated **in the reading selection.**

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

- **Contradicted Opinion:** A statement presented as an opinion that is contradicted by information in the reading selection.
- **Irrelevant Opinion:** A statement presented as an opinion that introduces information not included in the reading selection.
- **Fact:** A statement from (or related to) the reading selection that is a fact rather than a judgment or belief.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item:

Choice C: The opinion expressed in this answer choice is another way of stating the final sentence of the reading selection. It is an opinion because the statement that parental involvement is a critical component of a successful educational program is merely a judgment or belief. Thus, this answer choice is correct because it is an opinion presented **in the selection.**

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item:

Choice A: It is a **fact** that there are 10 activities in the Teacher-Parent Partnership Program because the truth of this statement can be verified. Therefore, this statement cannot be correct.

Choice B: This statement is an opinion because it represents a belief or point of view. However, this opinion is **irrelevant** because the selection does not suggest whether student needs have changed during the past few years.

Choice D: This statement involves an opinion because people vary in their views about how much something must cost before it is considered to be "costly." However, this particular opinion is **contradicted** in the selection's fifth sentence, which states that the activities are **not** expensive.

REFERENCE USAGE

Test items for this skill will require examinees to demonstrate that they can use reference materials properly. The two types of reference usage items will be **using a reference source** and **selecting a reference source** questions.

Reference sources for questions measuring this skill will be drawn from the following list:

— a class schedule (teacher's or student's)
— a table
— a graph
— a card catalogue from a library
— a dictionary
— a thesaurus
— a standardized-test guide
— a curriculum guide/framework
— an encyclopedia
— the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*
— a table of contents (from a professional journal, teacher's manual or guide, college textbook, or student textbook)
— an index (from a professional journal, teacher's manual or guide, college textbook, or student textbook)
— a bibliography (from a professional journal, teacher's manual or guide, college textbook, or student textbook)

USING A REFERENCE SOURCE

Sample Item

Adapted from the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature:*

Educational associations

See also
National Education Association of the United States
Parents' and teachers' associations
Phi Delta Kappa

The future looks bright for the P.T.A. M. C. Radcliff. *Change* 15:22-9 July/Aug. '84.

The voice of education. L. L. Bates. *Phi Delta Kappan* 64:590-1 April '84

Educational cooperation

A cooperative effort: College professors serve as tutors for gifted sixth-graders in Cincinnati. R. Hyde. *The Education Digest* 49:51-3 Sept. '84

Unifying educators: Different approaches. J. Shaw. *Phi Delta Kappan* 64:106 Aug. '84

Educational counseling

Bringing it all together in group counseling sessions. S. T. Rausch. *Phi Delta Kappan* 64:59-69 Feb. '84

Counseling our high school students. G. Scott. *The Education Digest* 49:104-8 Nov. '84

Where should an educator look to find information about different ways to unify teachers?

A the February 1984 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*

B under the heading "Educational counseling"

C the August 1984 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*

D the September 1984 issue of *The Education Digest*

Test Question

Using-a-reference-source items will consist of a displayed excerpt from one of the eligible reference sources. Each display will be followed by a question which requires examinees to locate a specific piece of information using the display.

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be the piece of information on the display that accurately answers the test question. Mathematical operations will not be required to answer the question.

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

- **Adjacent Information:** Information from the display that is next to the requested information.
- **Inappropriate Information:** Information from the display that is similar in meaning or appearance to the requested information.
- **Irrelevant Information:** Information from the display, other than the two types of incorrect information described above, that does not answer the question.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice C: The title of the article that appears in the August 1984 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* is "Unifying educators: Different approaches." This title indicates that the article contains information about different ways to unify teachers. Therefore, answer choice C is correct.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: This **inappropriate** choice is similar in appearance to the correct answer because it specifies the same magazine title *(Phi Delta Kappan)* as the correct answer. However, the subject matter of the article that appears in the February 1984 issue is not related to unifying teachers.

Choice B: This answer is **irrelevant** because no articles on unifying teachers appear under the heading **"Educational counseling."**

Choice D: This answer is **adjacent** or next to the correct answer in the display.

SELECTING A REFERENCE SOURCE

Sample Item

Where could an educator find the page on which the third chapter of a book begins?

A an index

B a bibliography

C the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*

D a table of contents

Test Questions

Selecting-a-reference-source items will consist of a one-sentence question that asks where a particular type of information can be found.

Answer Choices

Each answer choice will be one of the eligible reference sources. The correct answer choice will be the name of the reference source that provides the type of information requested in the question.

The incorrect answer choices will be:

- **Incorrect Source:** Reference sources from the list of eligible reference sources that cannot provide the type of information requested by the question.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice D: A table of contents, which generally appears before the main text of a publication, typically lists the chapter numbers, the chapter titles (if any), and the page number on which each chapter begins. Thus, an educator can use a table of contents to find the page where the third chapter of a book begins.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: An index, which generally follows the main text of a publication, is an alphabetized list of the content that is contained in the body of a written work. Page numbers indicate where specific content can be found, not where chapters begin. Thus, this is an **incorrect source.**

Choice B: The bibliography, which generally follows the main text of a written publication, is a list of works referred to in the publication or consulted by the author while researching the topic. It does not indicate where chapters begin. Thus, this is an **incorrect source.**

Choice C: *The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* is a regularly published and updated index of articles written in magazines. Thus, this is an **incorrect source.**

INFERENCE

Test items for this skill will require examinees to draw conclusions from a reading selection. These conclusions can be drawn solely from information supplied in the selection.

Sample Item

> Adapted from an education journal:
>
> The most effective schools are those that possess quality leadership. One way to insure quality leadership is to have an outstanding principal and provide that person with far-ranging administrative authority.
>
> Individuals who are successful as principals must possess characteristics that are not necessarily the same as those needed to be good teachers. The special talents required to run a classroom effectively may not fully overlap with those skills needed to run a school. Hiring the best teachers as principals also removes the most talented instructors from the classroom. However, there is one characteristic that is equally necessary to a good principal or teacher—the ability to be flexible.

Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A Good teachers never make good principals.

B Schools are more likely to be effective if the principal is flexible.

C Principals function most effectively if their authority is carefully controlled by district officials.

D The most important characteristic of good principals is their ability to work well with teachers.

Test Questions

Inference items will consist of a reading selection followed by the question, "Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

To make the required inference, it will be necessary to do one of the following:

- — make comparisons,
- — determine cause or effect,
- — predict outcomes,
- — arrive at a generalization from a series of details,
- — evaluate or make judgments, or
- — draw logical conclusions other than those listed above.

Answer Choices

The correct answer choice will be a correct inference that is clearly supported by information in the reading selection.

The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

- — **Inaccurate:** A statement that is contradicted by information in the reading selection.
- — **Unsupported:** A statement that may sound reasonable, but does not necessarily follow from information in the reading selection.
- — **Irrelevant:** A statement that is in no way logically true based on information in the reading selection. This inference often introduces information not included in the selection.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice B: This statement is a correct inference drawn from three pieces of information in the reading selection. The writer of the selection states that:

(1) Effective schools possess quality leadership (from the first sentence).

(2) Quality leadership can come from outstanding principals (from the second sentence).

(3) Flexibility is a necessary characteristic of good principals (from the final sentence).

Thus, flexibility contributes to the making of a good principal, good principals provide quality leadership, and quality leadership results in effective schools. Following this logic, flexibility in a principal contributes to the effectiveness of a school. Therefore, answer choice B is correct.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: This **unsupported** statement cannot be drawn logically from the reading selection. The selection states that the qualities needed by effective teachers, and principals **may not** fully overlap. It does not necessarily follow that good teachers never make good principals. After all, both occupations require flexibility. Maybe other traits are shared as well. Moreover, even if the necessary traits do not overlap, there could still be individuals with the qualifications to be both a good principal and a good teacher.

Choice C: This statement is **contradicted** by the second sentence of the reading selection. This sentence states that principals need far-ranging authority; this answer choice states that the principal's authority should be carefully controlled.

Choice D: This **irrelevant** statement introduces information not found in the reading selection. It does not describe the **most** important characteristic of a good principal. In fact, the ability of principals to work well with teachers is not discussed in the selection.

TECAT WRITING SKILLS
MECHANICS

Test items for this skill will require examinees to identify errors in capitalization, punctuation, or spelling from a written communication that an educator might write to students, parents, colleagues, or community members. Thus, the three types of mechanics items will be **capitalization, punctuation,** and **spelling.**

All parts of the communication will be identified by bracketed numbers such as [1] or [2]. These numbers will divide the communication into sections that correspond to the answer choices.

Examinees will be required to identify the part of the communication that contains an error or to indicate that no error is present.

CAPITALIZATION

Test items for this skill will require examinees to determine whether there is an error in capitalization in a brief communication.

Sample Item

Adapted from an article on school activities:

[1] The Social Studies Department of Palo Verde High School is sponsoring an essay contest. [2] All interested students are invited to enter the contest. [3] Write about the person you most admire in Texas History. [4] Submit your essay on or before November 24. [5] Prizes will be awarded for the top three essays.

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization?**

A Part [1]

B Part [2]

C Part [3]

D None of the above

Test Questions

Capitalization items will consist of an excerpt from a written communication followed by the question, "In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization?**"

Each communication will contain either one error in capitalization or no errors in capitalization. Capitalization errors will be based on the capitalization rules that accompany the description of this skill.

Answer Choices

The first three answer choices will correspond to numbered parts of the written communication that may contain an error. The fourth answer choice will be "None of the above." "None of the above" will refer to the parts specified in the first three answer choices.

If the communication contains an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

— The correct answer choice will be:

(1) the part of the communication in which **required capitalization is omitted,** or

(2) the part of the communication in which **inappropriate capitalization** is present.

- The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:
  - (1) **Proper Capitalization:** A part of the communication where no capitalization error is present.
  - (2) **Unidentified Error:** The "None of the above" answer choice.

If the communication does not contain an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- The correct answer choice will be "None of the above."
- The incorrect answer choices will be:

  Proper Capitalization: A part of the communication where no capitalization error is present.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice C: The word history should not be capitalized. Subject names such as history, mathematics, or algebra are never capitalized unless they are (1) followed by a course title such as History 102 or (2) are proper nouns such as English or French. (See capitalization rule 2.g.)

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: Part [1] contains no error and demonstrates **proper capitalization.** The title of a department should be capitalized, as should the name of a high school. (See capitalization rule 1.l.)

Choice B: Part [2] contains no error and demonstrates **proper capitalization.** Only the word "all" is capitalized because it is the first word of the sentence. (See capitalization rule 1.a.)

Choice D: This answer choice represents an **unidentified error** because there is a capitalization error in part [3] of the communication.

Capitalization Rules Eligible for Testing

1. Initial capitals are required for:
   - a. the first word of a sentence
   - b. names of days of the week
   - c. names of months of the year
   - d. the pronoun I
   - e. names, including initials, of individuals
   - f. titles which precede individuals' names
   - g. all the words in the names of holidays except short prepositions (less than five letters) and articles
   - h. the first word and all nouns in the salutation of a letter
   - i. the first word in the complimentary close of a letter
   - j. family-relationship names when they precede a name or are used in place of a person's name, especially in direct address
   - k. all the words in the names of the specific geographic locations except short prepositions, conjunctions, and articles
   - l. all the words in names of specific organizations and agencies except short prepositions, conjunctions, and articles
   - m. names of languages
   - n. names of nationalities
   - o. names of religions
   - p. adjectives formed from geographical names, languages, races, nationalities, and religions
   - q. the first word and all other words in titles of books, articles, works of art, etc. except short prepositions, conjunctions, and articles
2. Initial capitals are never used for:
   - a. common nouns
   - b. adjectives not based on proper nouns
   - c. words other than the first word in the complimentary close of a letter
   - d. short prepositions, conjunctions, or articles in the names of holidays, specific geographical locations, specific organizations, and titles of books, articles, etc.
   - e. compass directions that designate direction rather than a section of the country
   - f. names of school subjects except for (1) proper nouns and adjectives or (2) course titles that are followed by a number

PUNCTUATION

Test items for this skill will require examinees to determine whether there is an error in punctuation in a brief communication.

Sample Item

> Adapted from a letter to parents:
>
> [1] Dear Parents:
>
> [2] Our first-grade students, are setting up a classroom supermarket to be used as a learning center for various activities. [3] Would you be willing to help us? [4] Please send clean, empty containers from familiar supermarket items. [5] Other props, such as play money or a toy cash register, would also be appreciated
>
> [6] Sincerely yours,
>
> [7] Mr. Johnson
> [8] Teacher
> [9] Costa Mesa Elementary School

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **punctuation**?

A Part [2]
B Part [3]
C Part [4]
D None of the above

Test Questions

Punctuation items will consist of an excerpt from a written communication followed by the question, "In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **punctuation**?"

Each communication will contain either one error in punctuation or no errors in punctuation. Punctuation errors will be based on the punctuation rules that accompany the description of this skill.

Answer Choices

The first three answer choices will correspond to numbered parts of the written communication that may contain an error. The fourth answer choice will be "None of the above." "None of the above" will refer to the parts specified in the first three answer choices.

If the communication contains an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- The correct answer choice will be:
  - (1) the part of the communication in which **required punctuation is omitted** or
  - (2) the part of the communication in which an **extraneous** or **misused punctuation mark** is present.
- The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:
  - (1) **Proper Punctuation:** A part of the communication where no punctuation error is present.
  - (2) **Unidentified Error:** The "None of the above" answer choice.

If the communication does not contain an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- — The correct answer choice will be "None of the above."
- — The incorrect answer choices will be:

  Proper Punctuation: A part of the communication where no punctuation error is present.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice A: There should not be a comma in part [2]. The subject and verb of a sentence should never be separated by a comma when they are next to each other.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice B: Part [3] contains no error and demonstrates **proper punctuation.** The question mark is used correctly as the final punctuation for a sentence that is a direct question. (See punctuation rule 2.)

Choice C: Part [4] contains no error and demonstrates **proper punctuation.** The comma between "clean" and "empty" is correct because adjectives in a list must be separated by commas. (See punctuation rule 3.c.) The period is the proper punctuation for the end of a statement. (See punctuation rule 1.a.)

Choice D: This answer choice represents an **unidentified error** because there is a punctuation error in part [2] of the communication.

Punctuation Rules Eligible for Testing

1. **Periods** are required:
   a. at the end of all declarative sentences, including indirect questions
   b. after abbreviations
2. **Question marks** are required at the end of a direct question
3. **Commas** are required:
   a. in a series of three or more words or phrases (Educators will not be tested on the use of the comma before "and" or "or" in a series)
   b. between two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction
   c. to separate coordinate adjectives that modify the same noun
   d. to set off nonessential clauses and nonessential participial phrases
   e. to set off expressions, such as appositives, that interrupt the sentence
   f. after the salutation in a friendly letter
   g. after the complimentary close in a letter
   h. between the independent parts of a date (except when only one part of the date, such as the month, is used, in which case no punctuation is needed)
   i. between the independent parts of an address or geographic location
   j. before a direct quotation
4. **Semicolons** are required between independent clauses not joined by coordinating conjunctions
5. **Apostrophes** are required:
   a. to form possessive nouns
   b. to form contractions
6. **Colons** are required:
   a. to separate hours and minutes in time
   b. after the salutation in a business letter

SPELLING

Test items for this skill will require examinees to determine whether there is a misspelled word in a brief communication.

Sample Item

> Adapted from feedback to a student:
>
> [1] Ted,
>
> [2] Although this essay contains many errors in mechanics, it expresses some original and complex ideas. [3] You can improve your writing by practicing. [4] The most important goal in good writing is to express yourself clearly, and you are acheiving this goal. [5] I found your essay interesting and thought-provoking. [6] Don't be discouraged!

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **spelling**?

A Part [2]

B Part [3]

C Part [4]

D None of the above

Test Questions

Spelling items will consist of an excerpt from a written communication followed by the question, "In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **spelling**?"

Each communication will contain either one error in spelling or no errors in spelling. Words eligible to be misspelled appear on the TEA Cumulative Vocabulary List.

Answer Choices

The first three answer choices will correspond to numbered parts of the written communication that may contain an error. The fourth answer choice will be "None of the above." "None of the above" will refer to the parts specified in the first three answer choices.

If the communication contains an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- The correct answer choice will be the part of the communication in which a word is **misspelled**.
- The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:
  1. **Proper Spelling:** A part of the communication where there are no misspelled words.
  2. **Unidentified Error:** The "None of the above" answer choice.

If the communication does not contain an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- The correct answer choice will be "None of the above."
- The incorrect answer choices will be:

  Proper Spelling: A part of the communication where there are no misspelled words.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice C: The word "acheiving" in part [4] of this communication should be spelled "achieving."

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Items

Choice A: Part [2] contains no error and demonstrates **proper spelling.**

Choice B: Part [3] contains no error and demonstrates **proper spelling.**

Choice D: This answer choice represents an **unidentified error** because there is a spelling error in part [4] of the communication.

SENTENCE FORMATION

Test items for this skill will require examinees to identify errors in sentence formation from a written communication that an educator might write to students, parents, colleagues, or community members. Errors in sentence formation will be sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

All parts of the communication will be identified by bracketed numbers such as [1] or [2]. These numbers will divide the communication into sections that correspond to the answer choices.

Examinees will be required to identify the part of the communication that contains an error or to indicate that no error is present.

Sample Item

> Adapted from an article on school activities:
>
> [1] Our school needs to raise $500 in order to buy equipment for our science laboratory. [2] Several different types of activities have been suggested. [3] A bake sale, an arts and crafts fair, and a talent show. [4] A meeting will be held during lunch next Monday to discuss what activity should be planned. [5] Come to Mr. Stewart's classroom at noon with your lunch and your ideas.

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

A Part [1]

B Part [3]

C Part [4]

D None of the above

Test Questions

Sentence formation items will consist of an excerpt from a written communication followed by the question, "In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?"

Each communication will contain one run-on sentence, one sentence fragment, or no errors in sentence formation.

Answer Choices

The first three answer choices will correspond to numbered parts of the written communication that may contain an error. The fourth answer choice will be "None of the above." "None of the above" will refer to the parts specified in the first three answer choices.

If the communication contains an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

— The correct answer choice will be the part of the communication that contains a **run-on sentence** or a **sentence fragment.**

— The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

(1) **Proper Formation:** A part of the communication where no sentence-formation error is present.

(2) **Unidentified Error:** The "None of the above" answer choice.

If the communication does not contain an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

— The correct answer choice will be "None of the above."

— The incorrect answer choices will be:

(1) **Proper Formation:** A part of the communication where no sentence-formation error is present.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice B: Part [3] is a sentence fragment because it is only a series of words. Complete sentences must contain a subject and a verb. This part of the communication does not contain a verb.

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: Part [1] contains no error and demonstrates **proper formation.** The sentence is complete because there is a subject, "school," and a verb, "needs." This part is not a run-on sentence because it consists of only one complete sentence.

Choice C: Part [4] contains no error and demonstrates **proper formation.** The subject is "meeting" and the verb is "will be held." This part is not a run-on sentence because it consists of only one complete sentence.

Choice D: This answer choice represents an **unidentified error** because there is a sentence-formation error in part [3].

ENGLISH USAGE

Test items for this skill will require examinees to identify errors in English usage from a written communication that an educator might write to students, parents, colleagues, or community members.

All parts of the communication will be identified by bracketed numbers such as [1] or [2]. These numbers will divide the communication into sections that correspond to the answer choices.

Examinees will be required to identify the part of the communication that contains an error or to indicate that no error is present.

Sample Item

Adapted from a memorandum to teachers:

[1] To: All Teachers
[2] From: Leroy Jefferson, Principal
[3] Subject: Library Fire Damage

[4] I spoke with a contractor today regarding the damage to our school's library from the recent fire. [5] The building will be repair within a few months. [6] Unfortunately, we lost about 30 percent of our book collection as a result of smoke and water damage. [7] Please encourage your students to use the public library until our library reopens.

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

A Part [4]
B Part [5]
C Part [6]
D None of the above

Test Questions

English usage items will consist of an excerpt from a written communication followed by the question, "In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?"

Each communication will contain either one error in English usage or no errors in English usage. English usage errors will be based on the English usage rules that accompany the description of this skill.

Answer Choices

The first three answer choices will correspond to numbered parts of the written communication that may contain an error. The fourth answer choice will be "None of the above." "None of the above" will refer to the parts specified in the first three answer choices.

If the communication contains an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- The correct answer choice will be the part of the communication in which a **rule of English usage has been violated.**
- The incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:
  (1) **Proper Usage:** A part of the communication where no English-usage error is present.
  (2) **Unidentified Error:** The "None of the above" answer choice.

If the communication does not contain an error in the parts identified by the answer choices:

- The correct answer choice will be "None of the above."
- The incorrect answer choices will be:

  Proper Usage: A part of the communication where no English-usage error is present.

Explanation of Correct Answer to Sample Item

Choice B: An incorrect tense of the verb "repair" has been used in part [5] of the communication. The correct verb tense is "repaired." (See English-usage rule 2.)

Explanation of Incorrect Answers to Sample Item

Choice A: Part [4] contains no error and demonstrates **proper usage.**

Choice C: Part [6] contains no error and demonstrates **proper usage.**

Choice D: This answer choice represents an **unidentified error** because there is an English-usage error in part [5].

English-Usage Rules Eligible for Testing

1. **Agreement**
   a. **Subject-verb agreement.** Subjects and predicates of clauses or sentences must agree in person and number. Subjects to be tested may include (a) simple subjects, (b) compound subjects joined by "and," (c) nouns separated from the predicate by an intervening phrase, and (d) indefinite pronouns. Collective nouns will not be used as subjects in test items.

   b. **Pronoun-antecedent agreement.** Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person and number.

2. **Verb Tense**

   Verb tense must be formed correctly.

3. **Pronoun Usage**
   a. **Nominative case.** The nominative case of a pronoun must be used in all simple or compound subjects of sentences or clauses.

   b. **Objective case.** The objective case of a pronoun must be used in all simple or compound objects of verbs or prepositions.

   c. **Possessive case.** The possessive case of pronouns must be formed correctly.

4. **Adjective/Adverb Usage**
   a. **Negative.** Only one negative word (including "scarcely" and "hardly") may be used to negate the same idea in a sentence.

   b. **Adjective and adverb form.** The comparative and superlative forms of all adjectives and adverbs must be formed correctly.

   c. **Adjective and adverb use.** An adjective must be used to modify a noun or pronoun. An adverb must be used to modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

5. **Homonym Selection**

   The proper homonym must be selected for a given context.

COMPOSITION

Examinees will be required to respond to one of two assignments designed to elicit a sample of their writing skills. The assignment will be relevant to the professional responsibilities of Texas educators.

Sample Item

Read the two assignments presented below. Then pick **one** assignment and prepare a response. Do not respond to both assignments.

1. A colleague of yours is applying for admission to a one-week program for outstanding educators at a local university. Participants in the program will be given specialized training in educational leadership and organizational management skills. This colleague has asked you to write a letter of recommendation to support his or her application to the program. Write a letter of recommendation that explains why you think your colleague has leadership potential and should be admitted into this program.

2. You are setting up a learning center on career opportunities. Students will be able to come to the center for vocational testing, career counseling, or to read about various employment options. You will need literature describing various kinds of professions for the reference section of the center. Write a letter to the Career Planning Center at a local university. This letter should describe your school's Career Learning Center and ask for materials that have information concerning training, salaries, and position availability in various fields.

Your response should be approximately 150 words and related to **one** of the two writing assignments described above. It must be written in English. Responses will be scored on the basis of mechanics, sentence formation, word usage, and organization. Letter format conventions (such as a salutation) may be used, but will not be scored. You may write in cursive or print, but your writing must be legible. Scratch paper has been provided. Your final response, however, must appear on this test form. Remember to select **one** of the writing assignments presented above.

Writing Assignment

The assignment will specify the purpose, audience, and form for the written communication.

The following types of writing tasks may be assigned:

- letters to parents
- memoranda/letters to colleagues
- letters of recommendation
- letters to community organizations
- reports/articles about class, club, or school activities
- letters to request job-application materials or to apply for an education-relevant job.

A dictionary will be available for examinees during the composition part of the TECAT.

Writing Response

Examinees should respond to only **one** of the two writing assignments. The response should be at least 150 words, legible (either cursive or printing is acceptable), and written in English. The response should also demonstrate correct use of mechanics, proper sentence formation, appropriate word usage, and appropriate organization.

The correct use of **mechanics** includes correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Proper **sentence formation** requires the use of structurally complete sentences (that is, no run-on sentences or sentence fragments).

Appropriate **word usage** requires that:

- — subjects and verbs agree in person and number;
- — pronouns and their antecedents agree in person and number;
- — nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs are grammatically and logically correct; and
- — the vocabulary used is appropriate for the specified audience.

Acceptable **organization** requires that:

- — the response is relevant to the topic and clearly expressed; and
- — a structure that consists of an adequate introduction, transitions between ideas, and a conclusion is used.

Scoring

Each response will be scored holistically by two trained, independent readers. If these two readers do not agree, the disagreement will be resolved by a third reader. Scoring standards will be established by the State Board of Education.

Feedback on the types of errors made will be provided for papers rated as inadequate.

Analysis of a Sample Response

To help examinees prepare for this part of the TECAT, an example of a weak response to the first sample assignment will be presented. Each sentence will be numbered, and an analysis of all errors in that sentence will be provided. A corrected version of this response will follow.

Example of a Weak Response to the First Writing Assignment

[1] Martin Wilson and I begun teaching social studies at Amherst Junior High School in 1979. [2] Since then, we have worked closely together. [3] Sharing ideas and information in order to maximize our effectiveness as teachers. [4] Although teaching is a profession where feelings of isolation can often arise I have always felt that I could turn to Mr. Wilson for advice and support. [5] I am writing this letter to recommend Martin Wilson for admission to your summer program on educational leadership and organizational management.

[6] In his present capacity, he has organised various committees and planned numerous successful field trips and fund-raising activities. [7] He was unanimously elected to this post in 1983 by his teaching colleagues. [8] The capacity of which I speak is his job as the Social Studies Department Chairperson. [9] Mr. Wilson's smarts, go-for-it attitude, and sensitivity made him a natural choice.

[10] Therefore, Mr. Wilson consistently demonstrates creativity as well as leadership. [11] He has initiated several worthwhile projects over the years; including an aluminum can drive and a culture fair. [12] He exemplifies the positive impact that a dedicated teacher can have on both students and colleagues.

[13] I hardly have no doubt that Martin Wilson will benefit from your training program. [14] In addition, I am equally confident that the other participants would benefit from their contact with Mr. Wilson. [15] He is an excellent candidate for your Training Program.

Error Critique for Weak Sample Response

[1] **Word Usage Error** (verb tense)—The past tense of **begin,** which is **began,** is the correct form of the verb in the sentence.

[2] No error.

[3] **Sentence Formation Error** (sentence fragment)—This group of words contains no subject or verb. This particular error could be corrected by replacing the period at the end of [2] with a comma.

[4] **Mechanics Error** (punctuation)—The introductory adverb clause, "Although teaching is a profession where feelings of isolation can often arise," should be set off from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

[5] **Organization Error** (structure)—This sentence describes the reason for writing the letter of recommendation and, therefore, should be written at the beginning of the communication.

[6] **Mechanics Error** (spelling)—The word organized is misspelled.

[7] No error.

[8] **Organization Error** (clarity)--Although a "present capacity" is discussed in [7] and [8], the capacity is not named until this sentence. The nature of his capacity should be presented before it is discussed.

[9] **Word Usage Error** (inappropriate vocabulary)—The use of the expressions "smarts" and "go-for-it" is questionable in a formal letter of recommendation.

[10] **Organization Error** (transition)—Transitions are often necessary, but "therefore" implies summation. This paragraph provides additional support for the recommendation of Miguel Pueblo. Thus, words such as moreover, additionally, or furthermore would be more appropriate transitions.

[11] **Mechanics Error** (punctuation)—In general, a semicolon is used to separate two independent clauses (containing both a subject and a verb) of related content. The second part of this sentence is not an independent clause, hence should not be preceded by a semicolon.

[12] No error.

[13] **Word Usage Error** (selection)—This sentence contains a double negative ("hardly" and "no"). Sentences should not be negated twice.

[14] No error.

[15] **Mechanics Error** (capitalization)—Training program should not be capitalized because it is not the name of a specific organization.

Errors such as the ones identified above weaken a response. It is also particularly important that the response be on-topic. For instance, a letter recommending a student for college might fail even if it contained no error other than not responding to the assigned topic.

Revised Version of the Weak Response to the First Writing Assignment

I am writing this letter to recommend Martin Wilson for admission to your summer program on educational leadership and organizational management. Martin Wilson and I began teaching social studies at Amherst Junior High School in 1979. Since then, we have worked closely together, sharing ideas and information in order to maximize our effectiveness as teachers. Although teaching is a profession where feelings of isolation can often arise, I have always felt that I could turn to Mr. Wilson for advice and support.

Mr. Wilson's intelligence and energy made him a natural choice for the position of Social Studies Department Chairperson. He was unanimously elected to this post in 1983 by his teaching colleagues. In this capacity, he has organized various committees and planned numerous successful field trips and fund-raising activities.

Mr. Wilson consistently demonstrates creativity as well as leadership. He has initiated several worthwhile projects over the past few years, including an aluminum can drive and a culture fair. He exemplifies the positive impact that a dedicated teacher can have on both students and colleagues.

I have no doubt that Martin Wilson will benefit from your training program. In addition, I am equally confident that the other participants would benefit from their contact with Mr. Wilson. He is an excellent candidate for your training program.

PART III

PRACTICE TEST

The remainder of the study guide contains a practice test that provides prospective examinees an opportunity to test themselves on the skills assessed on the TECAT. As described earlier, actual forms of the TECAT will be longer than this practice test. (Recall that the reading section will be composed of 55 multiple-choice items—5 items assessing inference and 10 items assessing each of the other five reading skills. The writing section will be composed of 30 multiple-choice items, 10 items for each of the three skills, and a composition.)

The items in the practice test were developed as part of the original item pool for the TECAT. All were subjected to the same development and review procedures as all other TECAT items. They are, therefore, comparable in content and difficulty to the items that will be used in actual forms of the TECAT.

At the conclusion of the practice test a correct answer key has been provided for all multiple-choice items. Because any one of an unlimited number of responses to the composition assignment would be considered adequate, you may wish to have a colleague review and score your response to this part of the TECAT using the guidelines described on page 31.

TECAT PRACTICE TEST

Directions: During the actual TECAT, examinees will be asked to make their responses on an optically scannable answer sheet using a No. 2 pencil. However, for this practice test you may find it useful to mark your answer choices directly on the test items so that you can easily compare your choices with those provided in the answer key.

Select the best answer to each multiple-choice item from among the four answer choices. Your response to the composition assignment should be made on a separate sheet of paper.

SECTION 1: DETAIL
(SPECIFICS)

Adapted from a school board policy statement:

Section IIIb: Regulations Regarding Duplication of Materials

1. Materials that are not copyrighted may be copied for non-profit educational purposes.
2. Copyrighted materials including books, reprints, or periodicals shall not be copied without written permission from the publisher if these materials could otherwise be purchased.
3. "Consumable" materials (that are copyrighted) shall not be copied. Workbooks, exercises, and test booklets, fall under the category of consumable materials.
4. Students shall not be charged more than the price of the copies.

1 According to this selection, which of the following materials may not be copied?

A periodicals that can not be purchased

B materials for which written permission from the publisher for duplication is obtained

C copyrighted workbooks

D materials that are not copyrighted

Adapted from a school board policy statement:

It is the responsibility of the designated textbook committee to provide recommendations regarding the selection and adoption of student textbooks. These recommendations shall be submitted to the superintendent in the form of a report no later than March 1. The report shall be signed by all members of the committee who participated in the decision. After approval by the superintendent, not later than March 31, two copies of the textbook committee's report shall be sent to the School Board. This report shall be sent to the textbook division after the School Board approves it.

The decisions made in this report are final and cannot be altered during the academic year. During the year, teachers are encouraged to provide evaluations of the selected textbooks until February 3. Alternative textbook choices and reasons for their consideration will be considered by the following year's committee.

2 According to this selection, when must the textbook committee's report be sent to the superintendent?

A during the week of February 3

B no later than March 1

C by March 31

D anytime during the academic year

Adapted from a newspaper/magazine:

There are guides that tell high school students how to study more efficiently. There are books about what classes to take to increase one's chances of getting into college. There are even magazine articles that tell students how to overcome problems at home and at school. Most have been written by adults.

Now there is a guide to getting top grades that has been written by a 15-year-old student. Tammy Jones, a straight-A high school student in Detroit, has revealed the secrets of her school success in *How to Get Ahead in School.*

In the first section of the book, Tammy explains why all students should get high grades and what prevents many from succeeding. In the second section, she advises students how to study, providing hints about the best places to study and how long to study. The third section is divided into four parts, each dealing with a specific subject: English, mathematics, science, and social studies. The final section describes how to get involved in school activities that can improve grades.

3 According to this selection, what information is presented in the second section of *How to Get Ahead in School*?

A why many students don't succeed

B how to take tests

C how to find a good place to study

D how to increase one's chances of getting into college

(SEQUENCE)

Adapted from an education textbook:

"Conductor" is a drill game that teachers of nearly any subject can use. All that is needed is a set of flashcards containing short mathematics problems or subject-relevant words. Here's how the game works, using economics as an example.

One child begins by standing next to another student's desk. The teacher displays a flashcard with a word such as "incorporate" on it. The first of the two students to define "incorporate" wins the round. The student who is first to define the word goes to the next desk to form a new pair. The other student sits at the desk where both students had been. If neither student knows the word, ask someone else in the class to define it, and replace the previous winner.

The musical chairs format keeps the students' attention and gives them a welcome chance to leave their desks. Students will enjoy competing for the most consecutive wins.

4 According to this selection, what must a student do immediately before moving on to the next desk?

A form a pair with another student

B select a flashcard for the next round

C call out "Conductor"

D define the word on the flashcard

Adapted from an administration manual for a standardized test:

It is important that all information on students' health and fitness be completed accurately. Therefore, complete these steps in the following order to insure that no necessary information is omitted.

First, write the student's name on the top of the form. Next, record age, height in inches, and weight in pounds at the time the fitness test is administered. This must be done prior to beginning the test. Administer each component of the test as directed in the manual. Record the scores in the space provided immediately following the conclusion of each test component. Plot the profile chart after the entire test battery is completed.

Keep in mind that there is no passing or failing grade on these test items. Nonetheless, encourage students to do as well as they can.

5 According to this selection, what should be done immediately after a student completes a component of the test?

A The next activity should be described to the student.

B The student should be given a rest period.

C The profile chart should be plotted.

D The score for that component should be recorded.

SECTION 2: MAIN IDEA

Adapted from an education journal:

Goal-based evaluation, one of the more popular approaches to the evaluation of educational programs, has been used by American educators since the 1930s. Ralph Tyler, perhaps the nation's most distinguished curriculum specialist, was an advocate of goal-based evaluation well over 50 years ago. Goal-based evaluation calls for the evaluation of an educational program according to whether the program's goals have been attained. If its goals have been achieved, the program is judged positively. If its goals have not been achieved, the program is judged negatively. Despite its popularity, goal-based evaluation has a major weakness. There is no built-in appraisal of the quality of a program's goals. Thus, a program directed at trivial goals, or even unethical goals, could still be judged positively if those goals were attained. This is a substantial shortcoming of a widely used approach to educational evaluation.

6 Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

A Goal-based evaluation has become popular among American educators only in recent years.

B Ralph Tyler is one of the nation's most prominent curriculum specialists.

C A major shortcoming of the popular goal-based evaluation approach is that the quality of program goals is not appraised.

D Many different kinds of approaches to educational evaluation have been used in the United States during the last decade.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: Teachers, Elmer Elementary School
From: Ms. Lee, Principal
Subject: Upcoming Special Event

As you know, next week begins our program to prepare students for natural disasters. At unscheduled times during the week, the school bells will ring to signal an emergency. Ask your students to identify the particular emergency (e.g., fire) indicated by the type of signal they hear. Then ask the classroom monitors to assist you with the appropriate actions to fit the nature of the emergency. A single bell will tell you when the exercise is concluded. These "at school" precautions will be supplemented with a slide presentation demonstrating home precautions in the event of a disaster. School and home safety checklists will be distributed to each student after the slide show.

7 Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

A Students at Elmer Elementary School will learn at-home precautions for dealing with natural disasters.

B A variety of activities are scheduled next week to help students at Elmer Elementary School learn how to prepare for natural disasters.

C A slide presentation on precautions that can be taken at home in the event of a disaster will be shown at Elmer Elementary School.

D Most students have had no prior training on the steps to take in the event of a natural disaster.

Adapted from an education journal:

The *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS) has just published the first major review of the quality of biology textbooks. A total of 35 biology textbooks and additional materials used in junior and senior high schools across the country were considered. Each textbook was reviewed by a current junior or senior high school teacher, a science curriculum specialist, and a biologist. The reviewers assessed the level of difficulty, the content, and the organization of each textbook, as well as the textbooks' illustrations. The review includes recommendations for or against a textbook's use.

8 Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

A A comprehensive review of textbooks in all subject areas was just completed by the AAAS.

B A textbook review should include an evaluation of the level of difficulty, the content, the organization, and the illustrations of each textbook.

C The quality of biology textbooks was reviewed by a team of three junior and senior high school biology teachers.

D The AAAS has completed an extensive review of biology textbooks and materials.

Adapted from an education journal:

National multiple-choice tests can supplement the information that teachers routinely have about students' performance. Such tests can sample content common to most American schools. In this way teachers can determine the progress of their students compared to that of students across the nation. The items which compose these tests are developed by experienced item writers.

National multiple-choice tests are not designed to replace teacher observations of student achievement or to replace teacher-made tests. They are designed to provide additional check-points on student progress.

9 Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** Appropriately constructed national multiple-choice tests may provide helpful information to teachers.
- **B** National multiple-choice tests have items which are carefully designed to match the programs of most schools.
- **C** National multiple-choice tests can be used to replace teacher-made tests.
- **D** Multiple-choice tests reveal far more about student knowledge than do any other type of test.

Adapted from an education journal:

In establishing goals for literacy, we need to go beyond the constraints of minimum competency standards. We need to help students develop the ability to use language effectively. Students should be required to read a variety of materials that enable them to become active and critical readers. As writers, students should be able to write for a variety of purposes and for a range of readers. In some classrooms, students are rarely required to write. Not surprisingly, these students do not develop their writing skills to their full potential.

10 Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** Students should be taught different writing styles depending on the purpose and audience for the communication.
- **B** The focus of reading and writing instruction should be on establishing minimum competencies in students.
- **C** Students should read the works of famous writers to learn an effective writing style.
- **D** Students should be required to read and write regularly in order to learn to use language effectively.

SECTION 3: JOB-RELATED VOCABULARY

> Adapted from an education textbook:
>
> Intrinsic motivation can be increased by relating instructional materials to real-life problems.

11 Which of the following is the best definition of intrinsic motivation as used above?

- **A** the length of time that information will be remembered following instruction
- **B** the amount of effort students expend in learning because of a personal interest in the topic
- **C** the speed with which knowledge is acquired
- **D** the likelihood that learning will be applied outside the classroom

> Adapted from a memorandum:
>
> Objective tests can be used to screen students who apply for advanced placement courses.

12 Which of the following is the best definition of objective tests as used above?

- **A** tests that were developed to measure students' potential for achieving instructional goals
- **B** tests in which students supply their own answers to short-answer or essay questions
- **C** tests that have a specified correct answer to each question
- **D** tests that were developed to eliminate the effects of guessing on performance

> Adapted from a memorandum:
>
> A norm-referenced test was one of the tests used to place students into Advanced English.

13 Which of the following is the best definition of norm-referenced test as used above?

- **A** a test on which a student's performance is compared to the performance of other students
- **B** a test given prior to a particular sequence of instruction
- **C** a test designed to indicate specific areas of a student's strength and weakness
- **D** a test on which a student must earn a particular score in order to pass

> Adapted from a memorandum:
>
> Each innovative educational program must be subjected to a summative evaluation.

14 Which of the following is the best definition of summative evaluation as used above?

- **A** an appraisal of an educational program conducted primarily to modify and improve the program
- **B** a careful review of the plans for an educational program prior to implementing the program
- **C** an analysis and summary of the instructional resources needed to conduct a program
- **D** a formal investigation of the effectiveness of an educational program

Adapted from a memorandum:

The eligible standardized tests to be used at grade nine have been approved by the District Examination Committee.

15 Which of the following is the best definition of standardized tests as used above?

A tests that are administered and scored in a specified manner

B tests in which a passing standard has been set

C tests used in a school over several different years

D tests created by individual classroom teachers

SECTION 4: FACT AND OPINION (IDENTIFYING FACTS)

Adapted from an education journal:

Alternative schools are schools that provide students with a unique opportunity to pursue particular interests not typically met in conventional schools. Students' level of effort is often higher in alternative schools. Alternative schools are generally smaller than conventional schools. Over half of the alternative schools in this country have fewer than 100 students.

Alternative schools usually arise in response to demands from parents, students, or teachers regarding a special need that is not being met in conventional schools. Although many of these schools have reported impressive accomplishments, not all are successful. Additional research would be helpful to determine which features of alternative schools contribute to their success and which do not.

16 Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

A Most alternative schools are private schools.

B The majority of alternative schools in this country have enrollments of less than 100 students.

C Student achievement is usually better in alternative schools than it is in conventional schools.

D More research should be conducted to determine what makes alternative schools successful.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: Teachers, Students, and Staff
From: Mr. Torney, Art Teacher
Subject: Greeting Card Sale

Everybody can use greeting cards, and there is no better time than now to purchase them. Once again it is time for the Art Department's greeting card sale. My art students have been designing their cards for several months. They are now ready to display their work and take orders for the greeting cards. The students have created an impressive array of cards. You will be surprised at the quality of work and the beauty of each card. Indeed, you could not find cards as nice as these in any store.

We need your support. As you know, the Art Department suffered serious budget cuts last year. The money made from this card sale will be used to purchase sorely needed art supplies. Come to Room 225 and place your order now. The students are anxious to share their work with you.

17 Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

A The student-designed greeting cards will be sold at a local bookstore after the sale on campus.

B Art students spent several months designing the greeting cards that are being sold.

C The Art Department suffered more drastic budget cuts than any other department last year.

D The cards designed by the students are beautiful.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: All Junior and Senior Students
From: Ms. Moreno, Counselor
Subject: Career Growth Opportunity

Representatives from six local companies will be on our campus next Tuesday to discuss employment opportunities available in this community. These individuals are scheduled to answer questions about their respective companies and, in addition, will give students advice about how to interview. This is a rare opportunity that should not be overlooked.

The representatives will be on campus from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Students interested in talking with the representatives should come to the counseling office between those hours. You must have a release form signed by your teacher in order to participate. Many of you will be looking for jobs soon. I hope to see you next Tuesday.

18 Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

A Students should not miss the chance to talk with local business representatives.

B The business representatives are scheduled to provide students with ideas about how to interview.

C Representatives from local businesses will be on campus next Thursday.

D Students participating in a similar session last year found the information very useful.

Adapted from a school board policy statement:

All students are entitled to enjoy the basic rights of citizenship. At the same time, each student is obligated to respect the rights of classmates, teachers, and other school personnel. Students who violate the rights of others are subject to appropriate disciplinary measures. Such measures are necessary to promote student responsibility in the school community.

It is up to the schools to foster a climate of mutual respect for the rights of others. Such an environment should enhance the educational purpose for which the schools exist.

19 Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?

- **A** Students who violate another student's rights are subject to disciplinary measures.
- **B** Many students today do not show enough respect for their teachers and peers.
- **C** It is necessary to use disciplinary measures to encourage student responsibility.
- **D** Parents should have the primary responsibility for promoting their children's respect for others.

Adapted from an education journal:

School crime is a serious obstacle to public education. To cope with this problem, many students report avoiding areas on campus that are considered to be hazardous. Furthermore, some students avoid school altogether if they fear violent attacks or theft.

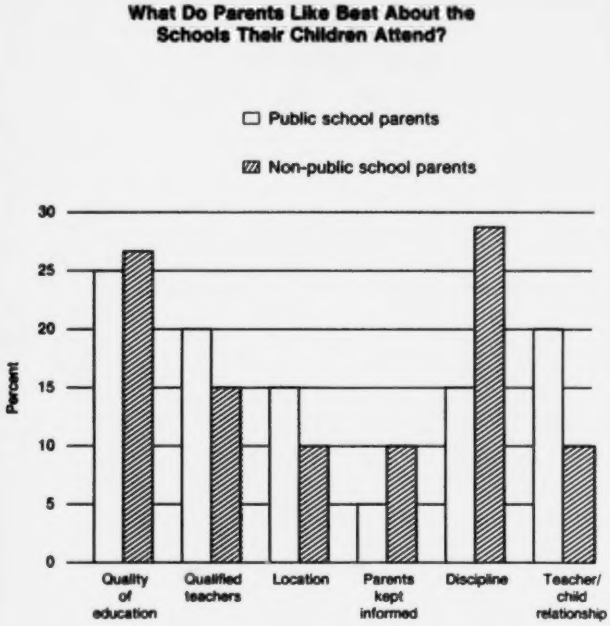
The disciplinary steps currently used to combat these problems are often ineffective. Temporary suspension, for example, may aggravate the problem. Students who have been suspended fall further behind in their studies and become more prone to disruptive behavior. Discipline can reduce school violence, but only if it is fair, firm, and, most important, consistent.

20 Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?

- **A** School crime has become the most important problem faced by schools today.
- **B** A principal's leadership style is the key factor in running a safe, law-abiding school.
- **C** Some students report that they stay away from areas at school that are known to be dangerous.
- **D** Consistency is the most important characteristic of discipline designed to reduce school violence.

SECTION 5: REFERENCE USAGE
(USING A REFERENCE SOURCE)

Adapted from a professional journal:



21 According to this graph, what do most public-school parents like best about the schools their children attend?

- **A** quality of education
- **B** qualified teachers
- **C** parents kept informed
- **D** discipline

Adapted from a list of abbreviations used in an encyclopedia:

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UP	United Press
U.S.	United States
USA	United States Army
U.S.A.	United States of America
USBGN	United States Board on Geographic Names
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USMC	United States Marine Corps

22 According to this display, how should you abbreviate the name, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization?

- **A** UNESCO
- **B** UNRRA
- **C** USBGN
- **D** USCG

Adapted from a bibliography:

Carson, J. B. (1981). "Ability as it relates to task difficulty." *Educational Researcher, 11,* 12-21.

Chire, L. L. (1971). "Studying childhood intelligence." In R. J. Katz (Ed.), *Research on Human Intelligence.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Chow, A. S. (1972). *Abilities and Human Development.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Cowhill, S. S. (1982). "Problem solving: Individual differences." *Journal of Educational Psychology, 69,* 9-24.

23 What is the title of the article written by L. L. Chire?

- **A** Ability as it relates to task difficulty
- **B** Abilities and human development
- **C** Research on human intelligence
- **D** Studying childhood intelligence

Adapted from the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature:*

TEACHERS

Attitudes

On changing teachers' attitudes. R. T. MacMillan. *Phi Delta Kappan* 64:374-5 Jan. '81

Teachers hold differing perceptions of teaching. J. A. Baker. *Phi Delta Kappan* 64:662-3 May '81

Awards

Let's salute the 1981 Teacher of the Year. M. S. Hawes. *Good Housekeeping* 196:54+ May '81

An interview with the 1981 Teacher of the Year. M. S. Hawes. *American Education* 19:26-30 July '81

Civil rights

Court decrees that teachers' mailboxes are not a public forum. T. J. Flores. *Phi Delta Kappan* 65:659-60 June '82

Education

See also
Educational workshops
Student teachers

Is it right to expect a teacher to play the role of parent? H. L. Blume. *Good Housekeeping* 196:72-4 Sept. '81

24 Where could an educator look to find information about the rights of teachers?

- **A** the May 1981 issue of *Good Housekeeping*
- **B** the September 1981 issue of *Good Housekeeping*
- **C** the January 1981 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*
- **D** the June 1982 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*

(SELECTING A REFERENCE SOURCE)

25 Where could an educator find the page on which the foreward in a book begins?

- **A** a table of contents
- **B** a library card catalogue
- **C** a bibliography
- **D** an encyclopedia

Adapted from an education textbook:

Several approaches can be used to help students learn to spell. For example, eye spelling involves memorizing how a word looks. This technique is useful for common words or for words like "gadget" that are somewhat tricky.

Ear spelling involves spelling by the way a word sounds. It is helpful in spelling longer words such as Mississippi that are spelled like they sound. Ear spelling is used less frequently than eye spelling because many words in our language are not spelled the way they sound.

In hand spelling, the student physically traces the outlines of the letters in a word. This approach is used much less often than ear spelling.

Thought spelling has recently come to be regarded as the best strategy for teaching spelling. It requires students to associate the word with an idea that has already been learned. Unfortunately, teachers still use thought spelling less than any other strategy.

26 Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

- **A** Children who primarily use one strategy to remember how to spell words spell better than those who use several strategies.
- **B** Hand spelling is the best strategy for teaching spelling to young children.
- **C** Eye spelling is used to teach spelling more frequently than is hand spelling.
- **D** Eye spelling is not used very often because most words are spelled the way they sound.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: Students, Faculty and Staff, Watson High School
From: Mr. Sundberg, Student Activities Director
Subject: Special Announcement

Plan now to attend the regional championship basketball game between the Watson High Rams and the Lakewood High Lancers on Friday, April 19. The game, to be held at the arena, will begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the Student Activities Office and are expected to sell out before the game.

Several buses will be providing round trip transportation between the Watson student parking lot and the arena. The buses will leave at 6:00, 6:15, and 6:30 p.m. Because space is limited, seats on the first departure have been reserved exclusively for the basketball team and its coaches. Seats for cheerleaders will be held on the second bus, although additional seats should be available for faculty and other students. Because a relatively small number of bus tickets are available, individuals who want to ride the bus should purchase them as soon as possible.

Come out and support the Rams as they play for the regional championship.

27 Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

- **A** Tickets for the 6:00 p.m. bus will not be sold to the general student body.
- **B** Basketball is the most popular sport among the faculty and students at Watson High School.
- **C** The Watson High Rams will try to win their first regional championship title on April 19.
- **D** Seats on the second bus will be available exclusively for cheerleaders, players, and the coaches.

Adapted from an education textbook:

As teachers you will need to know the regulations of your school district regarding illegal behavior. Consider the following case study. Think about how the action should be handled under the policies described below for Wakeview School District.

Ms. Salera, a teacher, was grading papers at her desk after school. Rose Porter, a student, entered the room and started a conversation with Ms. Salera. Rose strolled about, looking at the displays and items in the room. When she thought Ms. Salera was not looking, Rose put a set of inexpensive felt-tip pens inside her coat and walked out of the classroom. Ms. Salera ran down the hall after Rose, caught her, and took her to the principal's office.

According to Wakeview's Education Code, theft occurs when one person steals the property of another. Theft is a felony when the value of what is taken exceeds $200 or if the property is taken from one's person. All other thefts are a misdemeanor. Robbery is the theft of property by means of force or fear. Fear may involve a threat to inflict injury on the victim or on the victim's property. Robbery is always a felony.

28 Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

- **A** Rose's parents need not be notified unless charges are brought against her.
- **B** Student crime is a growing problem in Wakeview School District.
- **C** Rose committed a misdemeanor theft according to Wakeview's Education Code.
- **D** In Wakeview School District, theft of property is always a felony.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: Sandy Nesmith, Parklane District Superintendent
From: C. B. Sampson, Principal, Parklane High School
Subject: Elective Course Enrollment

Enclosed is the enrollment-trend information that you requested. These popularity trends are based on enrollments in our elective courses over the past four semesters.

Comparative literature maintained a steady enrollment ranging from 19 to 26 students each semester. The creative writing elective has been even more popular than the comparative literature course. Typing and music were equally popular and maintained enrollment levels similar to the comparative literature figures. The drama elective was very popular, having higher enrollment levels than the creative writing course. Speech and debate proved to be the least popular of the elective courses.

29 Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

- **A** Elective courses at Parklane High School will be undergoing extensive revision in the coming year.
- **B** Comparative literature is the most popular elective course at Parklane High School.
- **C** Student enrollment at Parklane High School has increased during the past four semesters.
- **D** Fewer students at Parklane High School took comparative literature than took drama.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: All Regular and Assistant Track Coaches
From: Chris Bell, District Athletic Coordinator
Subject: Track Conditioning Program

Below is a description of conditioning programs that are proposed for the track teams' practice warm-up. On Thursday we will select a program to use district-wide. The program selected must reduce injury risk by preparing the team for practice in 15 minutes without much fatigue. The programs under consideration are:

Program A: Two sets of 25 push-ups, sit-ups, and leg raises.
Three 20-second intervals of four leg stretching exercises.
A one-mile jog.

Program B: Three sets of 25 push-ups, sit-ups, and leg raises.
Three 30-second intervals of four leg stretching exercises.
A one-mile jog.

Program C: One set of 30 push-ups and sit-ups. Two sets of 25 leg raises.
Three 10-second intervals of four leg stretching exercises.
A half-mile jog.

Based on past experience and recommended exercise rates, I have determined that program A requires 11 to 14 minutes to complete with modest fatigue. Program B typically requires 20 minutes and causes considerable fatigue. Both programs A and B are sufficient to reduce the risk of injury. Although Program C causes minimal fatigue, it may not reduce injury risk because it is not sufficiently strenuous for warm-up purposes.

30 Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A Conditioning programs B and C cause too much fatigue to be used for track practice warm-up.

B Conditioning program A is most consistent with the stated selection criteria.

C Leg stretching exercises are more important than push-ups and sit-ups for a track practice warm-up.

D The same number of push-ups are required in conditioning programs A and B.

SECTION 7: MECHANICS

(CAPITALIZATION)

Adapted from a letter to a parent:

[1] Dear Ms. Marshall:

[2] This letter is in regard to your request for a conference with me. [3] I would be happy to meet with you to discuss Eric's progress in my english class. [4] Would Monday, June 1, be convenient? [5] I can meet with you anytime between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. [6] I look forward to meeting with you.

[7] Very truly yours,

[8] Eloisa Lopez
[9] Teacher
[10] Anthony Jr. High School

31 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization**?

- **A** Part [3]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a school announcement:

[1] June 1 will be the last date this semester to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test. [2] Next Friday is the last day to register for this test. [3] Applications are now available from your counselor or in Mr. Kennedy's office. [4] If you wish to enter a college or university next fall, be sure to sign up immediately.

32 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [4]
- **D** None of the above

(PUNCTUATION)

Adapted from a memorandum to colleagues:

[1] To: All Teachers
[2] From: Nadine Grant, Principal
[3] Subject: Teacher Appreciation Day

[4] Friday is Teacher Appreciation Day. [5] All teachers are cordially invited to a special breakfast in the staff cafeteria at 7:30 a.m. [6] Students and staff members will have prepared savory dishes, so don't be late. [7] Ms. Sadie Chisholm, a member of the District Board of Directors, will present awards. [8] See you there!

33 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **punctuation**?

- **A** Part [5]
- **B** Part [6]
- **C** Part [7]
- **D** None of the above

(SPELLING)

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Dr. Pashley:

[2] Last fall, I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance at an educational conference in Austin. [3] We discused, at that time, the possibility of my future employment in your school district. [4] I am currently considering a move to your area and would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you. [5] I will call your office next week to find out if there is a time that is convenient for you.

[7] Yours truly,

[8] Luis Margolis
[9] Teacher
[10] Newman High School

34 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **spelling**?

A Part [3]

B Part [4]

C Part [5]

D None of the above

Adapted from an article in a district newsletter:

[1] We are happy to welcome the arrival of two new teachers to our district. [2] Heather Morrison will teach French at McBride Junior High School, and Jake Lawrence will teach German at Cottonwood High School. [3] Their arrival provides an excellent opportunity to thank all the forein language teachers in the district with an after-school party. [4] The party will be held on Friday, April 10, at 3:30 p.m. at Brooke Hall in the district office. [5] Please let the receptionist know whether you can attend.

35 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **spelling**?

A Part [1]

B Part [3]

C Part [5]

D None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Mr. Edwards:

[2] Some of the faculty members have been discussing possible uses for the classroom that is vacant in the west wing. [3] I think we came up with a great idea the empty room could be used as a mathematics lab. [4] We could stock the room with games and puzzles that pose creative mathematics problems for students to solve. [5] The room could be arranged in a more casual setting than the average classroom. [6] Does this sound feasible?

[7] Respectfully,

[8] Lance Margolin

36 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [4]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Ms. Franklin:

[2] I was surprised by the number of students who want to participate in this year's band and orchestra. [3] Due to an increasing interest among students to get involved in the music program. [4] I would like to propose that we expand our school's musical organization. [5] Perhaps we can involve the students in a fund-raiser if additional funds are needed for loaner instruments. [6] It is very frustrating to have to turn away so many eager students.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Allison Humphrey

37 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [3]
- **B** Part [5]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a business official:

[1] To Whom It May Concern:

[2] I am interested in obtaining any historical information you might have regarding the Galveston area. [3] I am a fifth-grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary School. [4] My students will be writing reports on historical aspects of the city of Galveston. [5] A city of fascinating heritage. [6] Thank you in advance for any information you can send.

[7] Cordially,

[8] Gloria Rostagno

38 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [3]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from an article on school activities:

[1] Last week our sixth-grade students competed in a spelling bee against sixth graders from Maple Elementary School. [2] Matt Swift was the winner, he correctly spelled "effervescent" after Tom Snyder from Maple misspelled it. [3] Everyone at Sweetwater is proud of Matt and all the sixth graders who participated. [4] Sweetwater has won the annual spelling bee for the past two years.

39 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation?**

- **A** Part [1]
- **B** Part [2]
- **C** Part [3]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a memorandum to a colleague:

[1] To: All Teachers
[2] From: Jim Crest, Principal
[3] Subject: Teaching Evaluations

[4] I want to remind you that district representatives will be visiting our school next week for the Lakeside School District teaching evaluation programs. [5] Two evaluators, as a team, will simultaneously observe each classroom for about 20 minutes. [6] Conduct your lessons as usual and inform your students to expect visitors. [7] Based on my own observations, I am convinced that everyone will do quite well.

40 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation?**

- **A** Part [5]
- **B** Part [6]
- **C** Part [7]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to parents:

[1] Dear Parents:

[2] I want to remind you that next week we will switch to our "hot weather" schedule. [3] School will begin at 8:00 a.m., and the students' lunch period will be at 11:30 a.m. instead of 12:15 p.m. [4] All classes will be released at 2:30 p.m. [5] I hope these scheduling changes will not inconvenience you. [6] The faculty and me feel that the earlier hours will be better for the students.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Ruth Archer
[9] Principal
[10] Berry Elementary School

41 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a parent:

[1] Dear Mr. Newly,

[2] I have reviewed your son's grades as you requested, and his work in most areas is satisfactory. [3] Mathematics seems to be the area in which he has the most difficulty. [4] Presently, his grade in this subject is between a low C and a D. [5] I will continue to work with him to bring this grade up to a satisfactory level. [6] Let me know if you would like to confer with me about strategies to assist him at home.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Leroy Williams
[9] Teacher
[10] Strong Elementary School

42 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a memorandum to teachers:

[1] To: All Teachers
[2] From: Mabel Hutchins, Principal
[3] Subject: Final Grades

[4] Please turn in your final grade reports to either Mr. Jones or I by 2:00 p.m. on Friday. [5] Also, remember to leave the keys to your classrooms in the main office, and please submit any requests for changes in your teaching assignment for next year. [6] Have a nice summer.

43 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [4]
- **B** Part [5]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from feedback to a student:

[1] Bruce,

[2] You did a fine job on your book report. [3] The conclusion was both insightful and well written. [4] However, your plot analysis did misrepresent a few details. [5] Before I assign a grade, please revise your report, and make certain that all plot details are stated as accurate as possible.

44 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a parent:

[1] Dear Mr. Avery:

[2] I spoke today with your daughter's previous teacher, Ms. Stinson. [3] She told me that you are an excellent tutor for students who are behind in their reading skills. [4] I was hoping that you might have time to volunteer your services again this year. [5] I have several students in my class who would benefit greatly from your assistance.

[6] Sincerely,

[7] Matt Peters
[8] Teacher
[9] Northwest Elementary School

45 In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part]5]
- **D** None of the above

SECTION 10: COMPOSITION

Read the two assignments presented below. Then pick **one** assignment and prepare a response. Do not respond to both assignments.

1. One of your students has made remarkable progress over the past few weeks. The student's grades have improved greatly during this period. In addition, the student's entire attitude toward school seems to have become more positive. Write a letter to the student's parents describing the changes you have noted in the student and how pleased you are with these changes.
2. A special event entitled *"An Evening of Student Accomplishment"* was held at your school yesterday evening. The evening was organized in order to recognize students for their accomplishments in both academic and non-academic fields. For example, the school's band and chorus performed for a standing-room-only audience in the auditorium. Other students displayed their art work and the results of their vocational education projects. Still others presented oral reports dealing with their academic assignments. You have been asked to write a report for the faculty bulletin describing those activities which you considered particularly interesting.

Your response should be approximately 150 words and related to **one** of the two writing assignments described above. It must be written in English. Responses will be scored on the basis of mechanics, sentence formation, word usage, and organization. Letter format conventions (such as a salutation) may be used, but will not be scored. You may write in cursive or print, but your writing must be legible. Scratch paper has been provided. Your final response, however, must appear on this test form. Remember to select **one** of the writing assignments presented above.

ANSWER KEY

1	C	10	D	19	C	28	C	37	A
2	B	11	B	20	D	29	D	38	C
3	C	12	C	21	A	30	B	39	B
4	D	13	A	22	A	31	A	40	D
5	D	14	D	23	D	32	D	41	C
6	C	15	A	24	D	33	D	42	D
7	B	16	B	25	A	34	A	43	A
8	D	17	B	26	C	35	B	44	C
9	A	18	B	27	A	36	B	45	D

Composition: If you responded to the composition assignment, ask a colleague to review your response according to the guidelines supplied on page 31.

PASSING STANDARDS

TEXAS EXAMINATION OF CURRENT ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

January 1986

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INTRODUCTION

During its January 1986 meeting, the Texas State Board of Education established performance standards for the Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers (TECAT). In an effort to provide prospective TECAT examinees with a clarification of how their performances on that examination will be judged, this booklet describes the Board-established TECAT standards. Because one section of the TECAT calls for examinees to produce an actual composition, particular attention will be given in the following pages to the standards that will be applied to each examinee's composition.

NATURE OF THE EXAMINATION

The TECAT consists of two sections, one in reading and one in writing. The reading section is composed of 55 multiple-choice items. The writing section is composed of two parts. The first part contains 30 multiple-choice items. The second part calls for examinees to write a short composition.

The reading section of the TECAT measures the following six skills: Detail (10 items), Main Idea (10 items), Job-Related Vocabulary (10 items), Fact and Opinion (10 items), Reference Usage (10 items), and Inference (5 items).

The multiple-choice part of the TECAT writing section measures the following three skills: Mechanics (10 items), Sentence Formation (10 items), and English Usage (10 items).

The composition part of the TECAT writing section presents two writing assignments designed to elicit a sample of formal writing relevant to the responsibilities of educators in Texas. The examinee is to choose one of these assignments, then write a response of approximately 150 words.

The nature of the various types of TECAT items is explained in considerable detail in the TECAT Study Guide distributed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). A TECAT practice test is also provided in that guide. Prospective TECAT examinees who have not had an opportunity to consult the TECAT Study Guide should do so prior to taking the examination.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Texas State Board of Education has established separate passing standards for the reading and writing sections of the TECAT. Thus, an examinee who passes one of the two sections, but fails the other section, would be required to retake only the section failed.

In the remainder of this booklet the Board-adopted passing standards for the TECAT reading section and the two parts of the TECAT writing section will be provided.

Performance Standard for the Reading Section

Before establishing the performance standard, the Texas State Board of Education reviewed various types of information relevant to the establishment of TECAT performance standards. Included in this information was the item-by-item and skill-by-skill performance of approximately 5,000 Texas educators who took part in an October 1985 field test of potential TECAT test items. Also considered by the Board were recommended passing standards supplied by (1) an advisory group of 35 Texas educators who had guided the development of the TECAT and (2) approximately 725 Texas educators and citizens who, in December 1985, had reviewed actual TECAT test items and field test data.

After reviewing this information, members of the Texas State Board of Education adopted a passing standard equivalent to 41 items correct for the 55-item reading section of the TECAT. Thus, to pass the reading section of the TECAT, examinees must achieve or surpass a performance level equivalent to approximately 75 percent of the 55 multiple-choice reading items.

Performance Standards for the Writing Section

For the writing section of the TECAT, the State Board has adopted a procedure in which the examinee's composition receives a score of 1, 2, or 3. Examinees who receive a score of 1 on their TECAT compositions will pass the writing section of the TECAT. Examinees whose compositions receive a score of 3 will fail the writing section of the TECAT. Examinees whose compositions receive a score of 2 will pass the writing section of the TECAT *if* their scores on the multiple-choice writing items equal or exceed the Board-established standard. In essence, this Board policy requires the use of the multiple-choice part of the TECAT writing section as a source of additional information regarding the examinee's writing ability. To pass the writing section of the TECAT, those examinees whose TECAT compositions receive a score of 2 will be obliged to demonstrate their writing ability by meeting or surpassing the Board-established score on the TECAT multiple-choice writing items. Thus, the score on the composition will have an impact on the overall TECAT writing section score as follows:

Score on Composition	Impact
1	Pass
2	Depends on performance on multiple-choice writing items
3	Fail

Multiple-Choice Items

As has been indicated, the multiple-choice part of the TECAT writing section will be employed as a source of additional information about those examinees whose compositions are assigned scores of 2. After reviewing a variety of technical data and recommendations regarding a passing standard for the 30-item multiple-choice part of the TECAT writing section, the Board adopted a passing standard equivalent to 23 items correct, that is, equivalent to approximately 77 percent correct.

Composition

Before considering the Board-adopted standard for the composition part of the TECAT, it will be useful to describe the procedures which will be employed in judging examinees' compositions. Each composition will be scored holistically; that is, a composition will be assigned a score based on an overall appraisal of the quality of the response. That overall judgment will be made on the basis of the following Board-approved criteria:

Legibility - The composition must be written (cursive or printed) so that it can be read.

Length - Because examinees are directed to write a composition of approximately 150 words, substantially shorter compositions will be graded more stringently.

Mechanics - Correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling should be employed in the composition.

Sentence Formation - Structurally complete sentences should be used rather than sentence fragments, run-on sentences, improperly coordinated/subordinated sentences, or sentences with missing words.

Word Usage - The composition should embody subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement; grammatically and logically correct nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs; and vocabulary appropriate for the specified audience.

Organization - The composition must be responsive to the assignment. It should also contain an introduction, adequate transitions between ideas, and a conclusion.

All compositions will be scored by Measurement Incorporated of Durham, North Carolina. The scoring staff, called readers, are required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in English, language arts, education, or a related field. All reader applicants must pass two interviews, write an acceptable essay, and receive a positive recommendation from a professor or job supervisor.

Before the scoring begins, all readers will be thoroughly trained. At the conclusion of training, they must pass a certification test to demonstrate their understanding of the scoring standards. Then, periodically during the scoring process, readers will be given recertification tests and validity checks to make certain that they are maintaining their accuracy level. Finally, every score of every reader is entered into the computer, thus permitting daily monitoring reports to be generated as an assurance that scoring standards are being met. Readers whose scoring accuracy comes into question will be retrained and recertified. Compositions scored by such readers will be rescored by other readers. Readers who fail to maintain appropriate standards for accuracy in their scoring after retraining will be removed from the scoring operation.

Each composition will be scored *independently* by two readers. Compositions receiving different grades from two readers, for example, a 2 and a 3, will be scored by a third "chief reader" who will independently read and score the composition, thus resolving the disagreement.

The Scoring Criteria. It is possible to isolate several of the scoring criteria which, if not satisfied in the composition, almost automatically result in scores of 2 or 3. *Legibility*, for example, is an important criterion. If the composition cannot be read, it will automatically be assigned a 3. Also, compositions *not written in English* will be automatically assigned a 3. Another key criterion is *length*. Papers that are much shorter than the requested 150 words provide an insufficient opportunity to judge the examinee's writing ability. Such papers will be scored more strictly than papers that are approximately 150 words or longer. Finally, under the topic-relevance subheading of the *organization* criterion, a composition must be *on-topic*, that is, clearly responsive to the writing assignment selected by the examinee. Compositions judged *off-topic* will be automatically assigned a score of 3.

The remaining criteria, *mechanics*, *sentence formation*, and *word usage*, will be the other elements in determining whether a composition deserves a 1, 2, or 3. Unlike a multiple-choice test in which one can identify a correct answer as well as an incorrect answer, each examinee's composition contains a variety of features that may be correct or incorrect. It is impossible to anticipate the nature or gravity of errors in mechanics, sentence formation, and word usage that might be found in an examinee's composition. As a consequence, no simplistic "error-counting" scheme can be employed to assign grades to TECAT compositions.

Frequency and Severity of Errors. There are two error dimensions to the scoring criteria, *frequency of errors* and *severity of errors*, that are considered in scoring *mechanics*, *sentence formation*, and *word usage*. A composition may be assigned a score of 3 because it has frequent minor errors, a few severe errors, or a combination of both. Obviously, errors do not conveniently divide into severe and not-so-severe categories, but fall along a continuum. The State Board has reviewed numerous examples of compositions written in the field test. Board guidelines for scoring indicate that the *frequency* and *severity* of errors in compositions receiving a score of 2 or 3 must call into question the capability of the writer to organize ideas and communicate effectively in writing.

Examples of compositions receiving each score are shown on the following pages. Compositions receiving a score of 3 contain frequent minor and/or severe errors. A serious spelling error, for example, is the misspelling of common words and education-related words that all educators should spell correctly. (Remember that dictionaries will be available for use during the composition section of the TECAT.) Serious errors in sentence formation and word usage may include, but are not limited to, such problems as run-on sentences, double negatives, and lack of subject-verb agreement. A composition receiving a score of 3 will clearly indicate that the examinee has problems communicating effectively in writing; thus the examinee will fail the TECAT writing section regardless of the score on the multiple-choice section.

Compositions receiving a score of 2 may have the same kinds of errors as a composition that receives a 3, but the errors will be less frequent and/or less severe. Performance on the multiple-choice section of the TECAT writing test will determine whether the writer of a composition receiving a score of 2 passes or fails the writing section of the TECAT.

As illustrated by the examples of compositions that follow this section, compositions receiving a score of 1 need not be perfect. The errors in these examples, however, are not serious enough to question the examinees' capability to communicate effectively in writing. Examinees who write compositions of this type will pass the TECAT writing section regardless of their performance on the multiple-choice writing items.

An examinee's style of writing will not be considered in judging TECAT compositions. Moreover, violations of debatable points of usage will not be considered errors. For example, although some authorities believe it improper to split an infinitive (for example, "to cover") with an adverb (for example, "to carefully cover"), other authorities consider the splitting of infinitives to be acceptable. Similarly, the use of a comma before the word "and" in a series (for example, "ducks, pigs(,) and chickens") is optional; hence its absence will not be considered an error in a TECAT composition. The scoring criteria apply to clear, nondebatable errors only.

All compositions assigned a score of 3 will be analytically scored by readers who will indicate the scoring criteria on which the papers were considered weak. Analytic scores will also be provided for the composition of any examinee whose composition is scored as a 2 and whose score on the multiple-choice subsection of the writing test leads to a failing grade on the TECAT writing section.

Examples of Scored Compositions. Because it is impossible to anticipate the number or severity of errors that an examinee might make when writing a TECAT composition, it is not possible to establish, in advance, the exact numbers or types of errors associated with each TECAT score point. However, to communicate to prospective examinees the nature of the scoring process, the remainder of this booklet contains compositions deemed typical of responses in each category. Two examples for each of the three scores are provided. The score that would be assigned to each composition and a discussion of the rationale for that score are presented on the right-hand page facing each composition. It should be reiterated that the TECAT compositions will be judged holistically, not on an error-by-error basis. The detailed error analysis provided here is offered only to illustrate the types of errors that contribute to holistic judgments. All six compositions were written in response to the following actual TECAT field-test item:

> One of your students has received outstanding grades during the past month. Although this student had always performed moderately well, the student has recently been obtaining the highest grades in the class. You are very proud of this student's progress and want to inform the parents of the student's achievements. Write a letter to this student's parents to describe the student's progress and to encourage them to continue to promote this kind of performance.
>
> Your response should be approximately 150 words and related to the assignment described above. It must be written in English. Responses will be scored on the basis of mechanics, sentence formation, word usage, and organization. Letter format conventions (such as a salutation) may be used but will not be scored. You may write in cursive or print, but your writing must be legible. Scratch paper has been provided. Your final response, however, must appear on this test form.

ESSAY TOPIC NUMBER

0	5

FINAL WRITING COMPOSITION

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Guerra,

Congratulations on your fine son! I cannot tell you how proud I am of Nando! For the last month, he has made the highest grades in his class. Nando has always done moderately well, but his recent grades are outstanding. The enthusiasm and pride he has recently shown in his classwork indicate that he has great potential.

I am going to reward Nando by presenting him with a map of the state of Texas. Perhaps you, too, will bestow some token of recognition upon him. I am sure, that you are as proud of Nando as I am. With your help and encouragement, I am certain he will want to continue his superb performance.

We all need praise and positive reinforcement from time to time. When we see how proud our loved ones are of us, we all do better. You, Nando, and I are no exceptions.

If I can be of assistence to you in any way, please contact me.

Sincerely yours,

IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Score: 1. Comments: Despite having two errors, this paper clearly demonstrates an ability to communicate effectively in writing. The errors are as follows:

- the comma after sure (line 12) is unnecessary; and
- assistance is misspelled in line 20.

ESSAY TOPIC NUMBER 0 5

FINAL WRITING COMPOSITION

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Andersen,

Olga has been doing extremely well in all class assignments and projects. Your support at home is definitely a factor in her outstanding achievement.

I have noticed that she is studying before, and after school to accomplish her goal. Olga has requested special projects to expand her learning ability. She seems to have taken a special interest in research projects in all her subjects. Olga demonstrates the desire to do her best at all times.

We all are aware that Olga has always been basically an average student, but her determination and desire has been instrumental in changing her academic attitude. I am very proud to be one of her her teachers. My co-workers are also proud of the quality of work that Olga is presently producing.

I encourage you, as parents, to continue to encourage Olga's progress. I know that it was your belief in her and her belief in herself that made her success possible.

Respectfully,

IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE

Score: 1. Comments: Although this paper contains a few errors, it demonstrates an ability to communicate effectively and is, therefore, clearly a passing paper. The errors are as follows:

- there is an unnecessary comma in line 4;
- the compound subject determination and desire (lines 11 and 12) requires the plural predicate have been; and
- there is an extra her in line 14.

ESSAY
TOPIC
NUMBER
05

FINAL WRITING COMPOSITION

Dear Mr and Mrs Juan Hernandez

I hope, when you and your family recieve this letter you are in the best of health, I am writing this letter to let you know how Juanita is doing in School. Firstly, she started out as an average student in reading, spelling, and math. I usually give her extra work in class, since, she finishes her work first, all the time. Today, we read a story about snakes, after I finish reading the story, I gave her some questions. She answered all the questions correctly. Juanita recieved an A in her reading. Also, I gave her some division problems. She got all of them correct. Juanita recieved an A in her math. In spelling Juanita got all her words correct and recieved an A. Lastly I want to encourage you to continue to work with Juanita in her reading, math, and spelling. Keep up the good work.

IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE

Score: 2. Comments: This composition has enough errors in punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and verb form such that additional evidence (from the multiple-choice part of the TECAT writing section) is needed. The errors are as follows:

* a comma should follow letter in line 3, and commas should not follow since and first in lines 9 and 10, respectively;

* receive(d) is misspelled in lines 3, 14, 17, and 19;

* the comma in line 11 creates a run-on sentence; it should be changed to a semicolon or to a period; and

* finish (line 12) should be finished.

ESSAY TOPIC NUMBER
0 5

FINAL WRITING COMPOSITION

Dear Mrs. Allen,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that Alicia has been receiving outstanding grades during the past month. Her grade in the course at this point, the second 6-weeks is an A.

Since we had our conference last month on Alicia's attitude and study skills she has constantly been receiving high daily grades and test scores.

Her academic acheivement in math and her now sincere personality has made her a better student. Sometimes, Alicia helps me with some of my slower students.

I am so proud of Alicia's progress, I decided to write you this letter informing you of Alicia's progress. Please contenue to ~~help~~ encourage Alicia. Her attitude has greatly improve. She is one of the best student in the class.

Yours

IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Score: 2. Comments: This paper contains a variety of errors in spelling, punctuation, agreement, and verb form. The errors are as follows:

* receiving and achievement are misspelled in lines 3 and 11, respectively;

* a comma is needed after 6-weeks (line 5) and after skills (line 8);

* the compound subject achievement and personality (lines 11 and 12) requires the plural predicate have made; student (line 20) should be plural; and

* improve (line 19) should be improved.

ESSAY TOPIC NUMBER 0 5

FINAL WRITING COMPOSITION

Dear Parent,

This letter is to inform you of your son's progress in my class. He has always been a role model but in the past few weeks his performance has been termendous.

His attitude behavior and comunication skills have helped encourage the other students at Rosemont High school to try a little harder. And do the best they can. His work asignments indicate that he spends alot of time on science and mathmatics. In classroom discussion, he is almost always the first student to respond the questions.

Parents such as yourself; who help and encourage thier children acheive goals are a fine example to our school and to our comunity.

Your son's goals will be acheived through your fine efforts. Congradulations and keep up the exellent work you are doing.

IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Score: 3. Comments: This paper contains numerous errors of various types. Although each error might be considered minor when viewed individually, the frequency of these errors significantly detracts from the effectiveness of the communication. The errors are as follows:

* there are misspellings of the words tremendous (line 4), communication (line 5), assignments (line 9), a lot (line 10), mathematics (line 10), achieve (line 14), their (line 14), community (line 16), achieved (line 17), congratulations (line 18), and excellent (line 19);

* commas are lacking after model (line 3), attitude (line 5), and goals (line 14); a comma should replace the semicolon in line 13;

* the "s" in school (line 7) should be capitalized;

* And do the best they can (line 8) is an incomplete sentence, that is, a fragment; and

* in lines 12 and 14, the word to is omitted.

ESSAY TOPIC NUMBER 0 5

FINAL WRITING COMPOSITION

Dear Mrs. France,

I am writing you in regard to you son John's achievement in my ninth grade class. He has recently obtain the highest grade in the class.

As his teacher, I am proud of you son, last week in class I put him in charge of a study group. A leader who can get and keep everyone's attention. All the other students enjoy what he did with the group that day. One student stop me after that class he said you son taught him many things. For Example, how to complete the work sheet properly. The student wasn't never taught how before.

Mrs. France, once again I'm proud of you son and his work in my class. I want you to encourage him to set his goals high.

Thank you,

IF YOU NEED MORE SPACE, CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Score: 3. Comments: A number of the errors in this paper are major, and thus detract considerably from the message conveyed. The errors are as follows:

- you should be your in lines 3, 8, 15, and 21;
- obtain (line 5) should be obtained; enjoy (line 12) should be enjoyed; and stop (line 14) should be stopped;
- line 18 contains a double negative, wasn't never;
- the comma in line 8 creates a run-on sentence; it should be replaced with a semicolon or period;
- in line 14, a semicolon or period is needed between class and he to prevent a run-on sentence; and
- lines 10-11 and 16-17 contain incomplete sentences, that is, fragments.

TEXAS EXAMINATION OF CURRENT ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

SKILLS REVIEW MANUAL

Texas Education Agency

1986

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INTRODUCTION

This Skills Review Manual is a self-study guide that was developed to assist Texas educators preparing to retake one or both sections of the *Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers* (TECAT). Self-study materials dealing with the specific TECAT reading and writing skills have been included. The manual is also intended for Texas teachers and administrators who, although having passed the TECAT, still wish to improve their reading and/or writing skills.

The State Board of Education has directed Education Service Centers (ESC) to assist examinees in preparing for subsequent administrations of the TECAT. Contact your regional service center for further information. Phone numbers and addresses of Education Service Centers are listed in the appendix appearing at the end of this guide.

If you are a Texas educator who must retake only one of the two TECAT sections, that is, either the reading section or writing section, you should focus on those parts of the self-study guide related to that section of the TECAT.

The first half of the Skills Review Manual covers the TECAT reading skills; the second half of the manual deals with the TECAT writing skills.

READING

The reading section of the TECAT is composed of 55 multiple-choice test items. The following skills are measured on the reading section of the TECAT. (The number of items per skill appears in the parentheses.)

- Detail (10 items)
- Main Idea (10 items)
- Job-Related Vocabulary (10 items)
- Fact and Opinion (10 items)
- Reference Usage (10 items)
- Inference (5 items)

To assess these skills, reading selections or other displays (for example, class schedules) similar to those that Texas educators may encounter while engaging in their professional responsibilities are presented. Most selections range in length from 50 to 200 words. The selections have been drawn from the following types of materials:

- educationally relevant professional journals;
- memoranda from administrators, counselors, librarians, or teachers;
- local school board policy statements;
- college-level textbooks dealing with curriculum, instruction, measurement, or educational psychology;
- educationally relevant articles/editorials from magazines/newspapers;
- teachers' manuals and guides to student textbooks; and
- student textbooks.

An introductory phrase, such as "Adapted from a student textbook," designates the selection's source. Examinees are asked to use the information **from the selection** to answer a question. Each question is followed by a set of four answer choices.

In this self-study guide you will be provided with instruction and practice exercises dealing with each of these six reading skills. For each skill, you will be given: (1) a description of **how the skill is measured** on the TECAT; (2) a **skill analysis,** that is, a description of the skill's key ingredients, which must be mastered by those striving to acquire the skill; (3) **sample test items** accompanied by detailed explanations of the correct and incorrect answer choices; (4) a five-item **practice test**; (5) an **answer key** for the practice test that includes answer analyses for all practice-test items; and (6) a **skill summary.**

All multiple-choice items used in the Skills Review Manual were written at the same time as the items used in the TECAT. Because the items were tried out with Texas educators, information is available regarding which wrong-answer options were chosen most frequently. This information will, when informative, be described.

Skill-Building Strategies

Because the skills of reading are assessed separately on the TECAT, you should try to strengthen your mastery of each TECAT skill, one skill at a time. Therefore, read each section carefully making sure that you understand each one before moving on to the next.

If you have trouble with any skill, you may want to ask a friend or family member for help. Be certain that anyone who assists you reviews the relevant contents of this self-study guide before you begin working together.

Using the Skills Review Manual

- Read the entire guide and take every practice test. If you are retaking the TECAT, be sure to review **every** section of the guide even if you performed satisfactorily on certain skills. Because the total number of items that you answered correctly (out of 55) determines whether you pass the TECAT reading section, even improved performance on skills in which your performance was satisfactory can help you pass the TECAT.
- If you answered **any** items incorrectly on a multiple-choice practice test, **read all explanations** of correct and incorrect answer choices.

- For any practice test on which you answered two or more items incorrectly, reread the entire section with greater care.

Proper use of this guide should help you improve your reading skills in general and permit you to demonstrate this accomplishment by achieving higher scores on tests such as the TECAT.

DETAIL

Reading comprehension depends on carefully attending to the specific information provided in a written passage. The information may deal with **specifics** such as a person's name, a location, a particular objective, a time, a date, a quantity, or a reason. For example, consider the following sentence from a memorandum.

"All faculty will meet on Tuesday, June 10 from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the district office for the year-end teacher inservice workshop."

This sentence contains details that answer several questions, such as **who, what, where, when,** and **why**. These details are important to a complete understanding of the sentence.

A **sequence** of information is also common in many written materials. Sequence items differ from specifics items in that a sequence usually consists of a series of steps that must be carried out in a particular order. For example, in teaching a lesson you present information in a specific order so that students master simpler concepts before moving on to more complex ones. When such sequences are written, the individual steps can often be identified by the first word of each direction. Words and phrases such as **first, second, next, then, after that,** and **finally** help the reader keep the sequence in its proper order. Noting the proper order of the steps in a sequence is an essential reading skill.

Because it is important to be able to identify specific details and to follow steps in the proper order, these skills are measured on the TECAT. The skill analysis section for detail focuses on how to identify specific details and sequential steps, then highlights common problems encountered in doing so. This self-study guide contains explanations that can help you avoid these problems, not only on the TECAT, but whenever you read.

How the Skill is Measured

There are 10 items based on specific details and sequences in the reading section of the TECAT. Each of these items consists of a reading selection followed by a question that begins, "According to this selection. . . ," and then asks a question about a specific detail or a sequence step from the selection. Specifics items will ask for details answering one of the following questions: **who, what, where, when, why, how, how much, how many,** or **which.** Sequence items will ask about what comes **first, last, immediately before,** or **immediately after** a given event. Four answer choices follow each question. The correct answer will be the choice that contains an accurate description of the specific detail or step in the reading selection that correctly answers the question. There will be three incorrect answer choices.

Skill Analysis

To locate the appropriate detail in a reading selection—that is, the detail that accurately answers a question about some aspect of the selection—you must read **carefully.** To answer detail items on the TECAT, first read the selection, then read the question following the selection, then go back and carefully reread the selection to select the specific detail or step that accurately responds to the question.

For sequence questions dealing with what happened "immediately before" or "immediately after" a given step, identifying what we can refer to as the **locator step** can be a particularly useful strategy. Such questions will ask something such as "What should the superintendent do immediately after Step X?" Because, in this instance, you are to determine what happened after Step X, then Step X is the locator step. Read the passage carefully, looking specifically for this locator step, then identify the step immediately after it. Similarly, to identify what happened "immediately before" a given step, read the passage carefully to isolate the locator step, then identify the step in the sequence taking place immediately prior to it.

Three kinds of incorrect answers will be found in the TECAT detail items. These three error categories are:

Incorrect detail from the selection. Some incorrect answers will be specific details or steps in the reading selection that do not answer the question correctly. For example, a question may ask **where** an event will take place and one answer choice may state **when** the event is scheduled. Thus, the fact that an answer choice is mentioned in the selection does not necessarily mean that it answers the question.

Inaccurate detail. For maximum reading comprehension, details and steps must be remembered exactly. In some types of incorrect responses, a detail or step will be expressed inaccurately. For example, if a reading selection mentioned 9 a.m. as a meeting time, 9 p.m. would be an incorrect answer choice. Therefore, you must be certain that the answer choice you select is an accurate restatement of a detail or step given in the selection.

Irrelevant detail. For a detail or step to correctly answer the question, it must come directly from the reading material. Some incorrect answers will include information that is not contained anywhere in the reading passage. The best way to avoid these incorrect answers is to make sure that you can find your answer choice in the reading passage.

Whether the TECAT question focuses on specific details or sequence, the best way to answer the question correctly is to **read carefully.** Sometimes details look very much alike, leading to confusion on the part of the reader. If you read with care, however, the TECAT detail items represent a straightforward challenge on which you can readily succeed.

Sample Items

Read this selection carefully and answer the question that follows.

> Adapted from a memorandum:
>
> To: Teachers, Ferndale Junior High School
> From: Ms. Wolay, Ninth-Grade Counselor
> Subject: Student Information Forms
>
> Today you will receive personal information forms to be completed by your ninth-grade students. Each form consists of two pages stapled together. Every student should fill out both pages.
>
> Have students complete the following information on the top of page one of these forms: student's name, parents'/guardians' name(s), home address, and telephone number. The bottom half of this page should be used to indicate the names and ages of any brothers and/or sisters.
>
> Students should be asked to write about themselves on page two. Please tell them to list their interests, hobbies, favorite subjects, and chosen career field if they have a preference at this time.
>
> Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1. According to this selection, where should a student's home address be written?

- **A** the top half of page one
- **B** the bottom half of page one
- **C** the top half of page three
- **D** on page two

This reading selection describes how ninth-graders are to complete their personal information forms. You are asked to identify where a student's home address should be written. The first sentence in the second paragraph of the memorandum lists the pieces of information that are to be filled in at the top of page one; listed among these pieces of information is "student's . . . home address." Therefore, answer A, "the top half of page one," is the correct answer.

Let us now examine the remaining three answer choices to see why they are incorrect. Answer B, "the bottom half of page one," is an **incorrect** detail from the selection. The bottom half of page one is discussed in the second sentence of paragraph 2; however, the student's home address is not to be written there. Answer C, "the top half of page three," is an **irrelevant** detail because page three is not mentioned in the selection. Answer D, "on page two," is another **incorrect** detail from the selection. The third paragraph of the memorandum describes the information to be provided on page two, and the student's home address is not included.

It is clearly important to pay careful attention to details in the selection, in the question, and in the answer choices.

Now consider the following selection and its question, which concerns sequence.

> Adapted from a teacher's manual:
>
> In learning about a certain historical period, students often find it useful to talk to someone who lived during that period. For example, there are still many people who remember what life was like during World War II. Students can gain first-hand impressions and insights from these individuals. They can also learn that their elders are informative and interesting.
>
> To promote this experience, first have each student select a person who was alive during World War II. This person could have been a soldier, a nurse, or perhaps a spouse or a child who was left behind by a soldier. Then have students conduct an interview with the individual they have chosen. Have them prepare a written report of the interview. These reports should be presented orally in class or displayed on a bulletin board so that students can share their findings.

2. According to this selection, what should students do first when preparing a report on what life was like during World War II?

- **A** Select for an interview an individual who was alive during World War II.
- **B** Read some background information on World War II.
- **C** Conduct an interview with someone who was alive during World War II.
- **D** Read a book written by someone who was a soldier during World War II.

This selection describes the value of talking to individuals who lived during certain historical periods and the steps the students are to follow in doing so. The question asks you to identify the **first** step in the process of preparing a report on what life was like during World War II. The first sentence of the second paragraph suggests that the teacher "first have each student select a person who was alive during World War II." The paragraph goes on to suggest examples of such individuals and states, "Then have students conduct an interview with the individual they have chosen." Answer A, "Select for an interview an individual who was alive during World War II," is therefore, the correct answer choice. It describes the first step in the process.

Now let's look at the other three answer choices and see why they are incorrect. Although answer B, "Read some background information on World War II," would be a reasonable first step, it is not mentioned in the selection. (The test question begins, "According to this selection. . .") Answer B, therefore, is an **irrelevant** answer choice. Answer C, "Conduct an interview with someone who was alive during World War II," is also an incorrect answer choice. It is an **incorrect** step because it is the second step in the process described, not the first. Answer D, "Read a book written by someone who was a soldier during World War II," is an **irrelevant** answer choice because this step is not mentioned in the selection.

PRACTICE TEST FOR DETAIL

On the following pages you will find a practice test with which you can test your skill at identifying specific details and sequential steps. Read and answer each item. When you have completed all five items, check your answers at page 7. If you missed any items, read why the answer you chose was incorrect and why the correct answer choice is the right answer to the question posed.

Adapted from an instructional materials catalogue:

The Cursive Handwriting Development Kit can be the foundation of a complete cursive writing program. The kit may be used for developmental or diagnostic purposes. It is useful for correcting handwriting problems at any age or grade level. The program offers a carefully paced sequence of worksheets in three levels of difficulty. Level A includes 25 worksheets with one-inch ruling. Thirty worksheets with three-quarter-inch ruling are included in Level B. Level C includes 42 worksheets with standard primary ruling of three-eighths inch. The complete kit also contains an instructor's guide, 10 spirit masters, and Good Work Award Stickers. Additional student worksheets may be ordered separately.

1. According to this selection, how many worksheets with three-quarter-inch ruling are included in the kit?

   A 10 worksheets

   B 25 worksheets

   C 30 worksheets

   D 35 worksheets

Adapted from an instructional materials catalogue:

The *Number Fun* activities booklet for grades K-2 provides a wide variety of ways for children to learn about numbers. Some of the activities found in the booklet are color-by-number pictures, matching of numerals to number words, and simple dot-to-dot designs.

The *Fun with Codes* activities booklet for grades 3-6 combines practice in reading comprehension and thinking skills. Students solve riddles, decode mystery messages, and learn various kinds of codes.

Providing extra practice for students in grades 4-6, *Math Fun* contains numerous types of enrichment activities. A variety of games such as deciphering secret codes and solving arithmetic problems to discover mystery messages are provided.

2. According to this selection, what activity is available for students in third grade?

A matching numerals to number words

B learning different types of codes

C learning how to write riddles

D solving arithmetic problems to find mystery messages

Adapted from a teacher's manual:

To review telling time, draw a clock face on the board. Then divide it in half by drawing a vertical line from the 12 to the 6. Lightly shade the right half of the clock. Explain that when the big hand (minute hand) is on the shaded half of the clock, students should tell time in minutes after the hour. Count with the students in 5-minute intervals from 5 minutes after to 25 minutes after the hour. Point to each hour numeral as you count. Then explain that when the minute hand is on the unshaded half of the clock, students will tell time in minutes to the hour. Count with the children in 5-minute intervals from 5 minutes to the hour to 25 minutes to the hour.

3. According to this selection, how should students tell time when the minute hand is on the shaded half of the clock?

A in minutes to the hour

B in 5- to 25-minute intervals

C in minutes after the hour

D in numbers from 12 to 6

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Adapted from a teacher's manual:

Stories that describe several kinds of animals provide many learning opportunities for kindergarten students. Try the following activity. Find or make up a story that mentions different animals, such as a donkey, a dog, a cat, and a rooster. Before you begin reading the story to your students, prepare a set of cards. Each card should have the name of one animal that is mentioned in the story written on it. Display the cards in the front of the room in the order that the animals are mentioned in the story. Begin to read the story. As you mention each animal in the story, ask the students to point to the card with the animal name on it. Once the story is completed, mention each animal again, this time naming the animal in a different order. The students should then point to the card with the correct name of the animal on it. This activity can be repeated several times to provide pupils with practice in recognizing the animal names by sight.

4. According to this selection, what should the teacher do immediately after finishing the story?

   A Prepare a set of cards with a different animal name on each card.

   B Mention the animals in a different order.

   C Read the story again.

   D Ask the students to describe their favorite animals.

Adapted from an administration manual for a standardized test:

Before administering the Elementary Achievement Test, fill in student identifying data on each test booklet. A student data grid is printed on the booklet's front cover. Start at the row of boxes at the top of the grid. Print one letter of the student's last name in each box. Skip one box, and print the student's first initial. Notice there is a column of circles below each box. There is one letter of the alphabet inside each circle. Darken the circles that correspond to the letters in the student's name. Darken the appropriate circle for "female" or "male." Write in the month, day, and last two numerals of the year of the student's birthdate in the appropriate boxes. Darken the circles below the boxes that correspond to letters and numbers in the birthdate. Double check the form to be certain that all identifying information is entered properly. Doing so will reduce the possibility of errors in machine scoring.

5. According to this selection, what should be done last in preparing a test booklet?

   A Darken the circles that correspond to the student's birthdate.

   B Print the student's last name in the appropriate boxes.

   C Submit the test booklet for machine scoring.

   D Check that student identifying information has been filled in correctly.

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The correct answers for the practice test are: No. 1: C, No. 2: B, No. 3: C, No. 4:B, and No. 5: D.

Item 1 asks you to select a specific detail about how many worksheets with three-quarter-inch ruling are included in the Cursive Handwriting Development Kit. The sixth sentence in the passage states, "Thirty worksheets with three-quarter-inch ruling are included in Level B." Level B is the only level that includes this type of worksheet; therefore, answer C, "30 worksheets," is the correct answer choice. Answer A, "10 worksheets," is an **inaccurate** detail; the number 10 only appears in the passage in relation to "spirit masters." Answer B, "25 worksheets," is also an **incorrect** detail; the fifth sentence in the passage states, "Level A includes 25 worksheets with **one-inch** ruling," not three-quarter-inch ruling as is asked for in the question. Answer D, "35 worksheets," is an **irrelevant** detail because the number 35 does not appear anywhere in the passage.

Item 2 asks you to read about activities booklets that are available at various elementary-level grades and to select a particular activity that is available for third-grade students. The only one of the three booklets described that is designed for grade 3 is *Fun with Codes*. This booklet is described in the second paragraph of the reading selection and contains, among others, activities designed to help students "learn various kinds of codes." Answer B, "learning different types of codes," is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answer A, "matching numerals to number words," is an **incorrect** detail; it describes an activity that appears only in the grades K-2 booklet, *Number Fun*. Answer C, "learning how to write riddles," is an **inaccurate** detail; third-grade students can learn to **solve** riddles in *Fun with Codes*, not write them. Answer D, "solving arithmetic problems to find mystery messages," is an **incorrect** detail because this activity is only available in *Math Fun*, a booklet designed for grades 4-6.

Item 3 describes an activity designed to provide review in telling time. The question asks you for the way in which students participating in this activity are supposed to tell time "when the minute hand is on the shaded half of the clock." The correct answer choice is C, "in minutes after the hour." This answer can be found in the fourth sentence of the passage. Answer A, "in minutes to the hour," is an **incorrect** detail. As is stated in the second-to-last sentence in the passage, students are to tell time in minutes to the hour "when the minute hand is on the **unshaded** half of the clock." Answer B, "in 5- to 25-minute intervals," is an **incorrect** detail; although these time intervals are mentioned in the selection, they are not relevant to the question being asked. Answer D, "in numbers from 12 to 6" is an **irrelevant** detail from the selection. These two numbers do appear in the selection—the second sentence instructs the teacher to divide the clock face in half "by drawing a line from the 12 to the 6"—but not in the manner described in this answer choice. Thus, this answer does not address the test question.

Item 4 is a sequence item that describes the steps a teacher is to follow in implementing a certain activity. You are asked to identify which one of these steps comes "immediately after finishing the story." To answer this question, you must locate this step. You will find it in the third-to-last sentence in the passage, which also contains the very next step: "Once the story is completed, mention each animal again, this time naming the animals in a different order." The correct answer, then, is B, "Mention the animals in a different order." Answer A, "Prepare a set of cards with a different animal name on each card," is an **incorrect** step. It appears in the passage but does not correctly answer the question. Answer C, "Read the story again," and answer D, "Ask the students to describe their favorite animals," are both **irrelevant** steps because they do not appear anywhere in the reading selection.

Item 5, another sequence item, asks for the last step in preparing an Elementary Achievement Test booklet. The last step mentioned in the passage is in the second-to-last-sentence, "Double check the form to be certain that all identifying information is entered properly." Answer D is the correct answer because it states, "Check that student identifying information has been filled in correctly." Answer A, "Darken the circles that correspond to the student's birthdate," is an **incorrect** answer choice. If you chose this answer you may not have finished reading the selection and, therefore, did not realize that checking the forms was a specified step in preparing a test booklet. Be certain to consider all steps that are listed in a reading selection when looking for the sequential step that correctly answers the test question. Answer B, "Print the student's last name in the appropriate boxes," is also an **incorrect** step; this is the first step, not the last. Answer C, "Submit the test booklet for machine scoring," is an **irrelevant** step that does not appear in the selection.

Summary

Correctly answering questions based on specific details and steps in sequences is mostly a matter of careful reading. Matching an answer choice drawn from the reading selection to the test question is essential to performing well on these TECAT items.

MAIN IDEA

The main idea of a reading selection is a statement that summarizes the **central message** of the reading selection. For example, if you were reading a journal article that described different ways to motivate students, a main idea statement would have to describe the central message of the article, such as "There are many ways to increase students' motivation in the classroom." Sometimes a selection's main idea actually appears as a sentence in the selection itself. However, the main idea of a selection is not necessarily the first or last sentence in a selection. More often, you have to figure out the selection's main idea by putting together information from different parts of the selection. Because understanding a reading selection's main idea is such an important reading skill, it is measured on the TECAT.

How the Skill is Measured

Each of the 10 main idea items on the TECAT consists of a reading selection followed by a question that asks, "Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?" Four answer choices follow this question. The correct answer will be a statement that accurately describes the central message of the selection. There will be three incorrect answer choices.

Skill Analysis

When you try to determine the main idea of a selection, read the selection carefully. Think about how you would summarize the central message presented in that selection. A good summary of a selection's major message, or unifying theme, is the selection's main idea. Keep in mind, however, that there is not just one way to describe the selection's main idea. Consider each answer choice for a test item and be certain to pick the one that best describes the central message of the selection.

There are three types of statements that are sometimes confused with a selection's main idea. All incorrect answer choices for main idea items on the TECAT represent one of these three types:

Inaccurate. A good main idea statement must agree with the information in the reading selection. Therefore, any answer choice that states something that contradicts information presented in the reading selection cannot be the selection's main idea. Be sure to determine whether there are any contradictions between the information in the reading selection and the answer choice you are considering.

Inappropriate scope—too narrow or too broad. A good main idea statement should summarize most of the information presented in the reading selection. Therefore, any answer choice that is either too narrow or too broad in scope cannot be the selection's main idea.

A main idea statement is too **narrow** if it only deals with a small part of the reading selection. For example, even if an answer choice is a direct restatement of a detail from the selection, it cannot be the selection's main idea if there is a good deal more information contained in the selection. This is probably the most common type of mistake made in determining main ideas. Remember, a good main idea statement captures the bulk of what is in the selection, not only a single part of that selection.

A main idea statement is too **broad** if it goes beyond the information presented in the selection. Answer choices that are too broad may seem to follow as reasonable conclusions from the selection, but they introduce ideas that are not actually discussed in the selection itself. To avoid answer choices that are too broad, make sure that the answer choice you select summarizes information actually presented in the selection. If the answer choice states a generalization that covers more content than was contained in the reading selection, it is too broad to be an appropriate main idea statement for the passage.

Irrelevant information. A good main idea statement should accurately summarize information contained in the reading selection. Therefore, any answer choice that presents information not mentioned in the selection cannot be the selection's main idea. For example, if the reading selection focused on extracurricular activities in school and an answer choice dealt with school absenteeism, that answer choice would clearly be irrelevant.

Remember, the main idea of a reading selection is its central idea. Don't select an answer choice that is **inaccurate**, either too **broad** or too **narrow**, or one that contains **irrelevant** information. If you are having a hard time determining a selection's main idea, eliminate any incorrect answer choices that clearly contain one of these three problems. Then, compare the remaining answer choices to see which one comes closest to what you believe to be the selection's main idea.

Sample Items

Read this selection carefully and determine which one of the answer choices best states the passage's main idea.

> Adapted from an education journal:
>
> Although many educators believe that art activities benefit their students, it is not clear to some how the students benefit. What do students learn when they make visual images? In painting, sculpting, or drawing, students learn that they can, in fact, create. The ability to create, to alter the world, teaches students that their actions have consequences. The realization that they can make a difference allows students to develop self-confidence. In addition to self-confidence, students learn judgment, physical skills, and persuasion. Although some may not see art as crucial, it teaches students many things that are essential for their entry into the adult world.

1. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** Art education only benefits highly creative children.
- **B** Art educators use the same teaching techniques as do other teachers.
- **C** Students can acquire self-confidence through drawing.
- **D** Students acquire a wide range of benefits through art.

This passage describes several ways in which art activities can benefit students. Thus, the main idea of the selection is best stated in D, "Students acquire a wide range of benefits through art." Answer D is, therefore, the correct answer choice.

Now we will examine the remaining three answer choices to determine why each of them is incorrect. Answer A, "Art education only benefits highly creative children," is **inaccurate.** The passage discusses how the process of creating an art object can benefit students in general; this contradicts the notion that only creative children can benefit from art education. Answer B, "Art educators use the same teaching techniques as do other teachers," is **irrelevant**; teachers and teaching techniques are not discussed in the passage. Answer C, "Students can acquire self-confidence through drawing," is too **narrow** in scope. It expresses **one** idea that appears in the passage, an idea that provides support for the main idea, or central message, of the selection. It does not summarize this central message.

Now consider the following selection and try to determine its main idea.

> Adapted from a school board policy statement:
>
> Students shall be provided with the opportunity to attend summer school. Summer school classes may be used to earn credit for subjects not successfully completed during the regular school term. Summer school classes may also be taken to fulfill regular school term courses. The program shall meet the same standards as those in effect during the regular school year. Libraries and other necessary instructional resources shall be provided during school hours. Students shall be awarded credit for courses begun and completed during the summer in accordance with the above conditions.

2. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** Summer school programs provide a way for students to graduate early.
- **B** Summer school classes that meet regular school standards provide opportunities for students to receive course credit.
- **C** Summer school programs shall maintain library hours during the school day.
- **D** Summer school courses may not be taken to earn credit for unsuccessfully completed regular term courses.

This selection discusses the opportunities available to students during summer school. This selection is best summarized in answer B, "Summer school classes that meet regular school standards provide opportunities for students to receive course credit." Answer B states the main idea expressed in the passage and is, therefore, the correct answer choice.

Let us now examine why the other three answers do not describe the central message, or unifying theme, of the passage. Answer A, "Summer school programs provide a way for students to graduate early," is an **irrelevant** answer choice because, although this idea may be a logical conclusion of the reading selection, graduation is not even mentioned in the passage. Answer C, "Summer school programs shall maintain library hours during the school day," is too **narrow** in scope; it expresses only one idea expressed in the passage. Answer D, "Summer school courses may not be taken to earn credit for unsuccessfully completed regular term courses," is an **inaccurate** answer because this idea is clearly contradicted in the reading selection.

PRACTICE TEST FOR MAIN IDEA

On the following pages you will find a practice test with which you can test your skill at determining the main idea of a reading passage. When you have completed all five items, check your answers on page 12. If you missed any items, read why the answer you chose was incorrect and why the correct answer choice is the best statement of the main idea of the selection.

> Adapted from an education textbook:
>
> Staff development programs for teachers have become increasingly popular in recent years. Because of the rapid increase in their popularity, the structure of staff development programs could benefit from a full exploration and analysis. For example, a study of existing staff development programs might reveal that different kinds of incentives make certain types of programs more attractive. Such information could be used to encourage teachers to attend important programs. Alternatively, a survey of teachers' opinions on different types of staff development programs could insure that such programs are consistent with teacher's needs. These types of analyses can yield results that will increase the productivity and benefits of schools' staff development activities.

1. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** Teachers should receive continuing education credits for participating in staff development activities.
- **B** Staff development programs for teachers have experienced a decline in popularity in recent years.
- **C** An analysis of staff development programs could improve the programs' utility.
- **D** A survey of teachers' staff development needs should be conducted in all schools.

> Adapted from an education journal:
>
> A teacher must make many decisions regarding what will most effectively help a student learn. To make such decisions teachers need accurate information about the unique characteristics of each student. Relevant factors include how a student approaches learning, what motivates a student, and the student's previously acquired knowledge and skills.
>
> Information about a student can come from people who know the student, such as parents and past teachers. The alert teacher also gains information from daily interaction and observation. Completed assignments and classroom performance can provide insights. Teacher-made tests are another major source of information about students. Such sources provide the bulk of the information available when decisions are to be made. Finally, standardized tests are yet another tool which can add to, confirm, or challenge the previously obtained information.

2. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** When making decisions about students learning, teachers can use many sources to gather information about individual students.
- **B** Homework assignments and teacher-made tests provide teachers with a good deal of information about their students.
- **C** Because teachers need to make many decisions, they could benefit from extensive training in decision-making techniques.
- **D** Standardized tests are not particularly useful sources of information about students.

Adapted from a teacher's manual:

Two types of activities with puppets are frequently used to enhance learning—direct play and projective play. In direct play, children are encouraged to play naturally with the puppets, without specific scripts or settings. Through such play, students can improve their language skills and learn to express their feelings. In the second type of play with puppets, projective play, students are asked to use the puppets to act out different instructional or social situations. Such play activities can help teachers convey to students the impact of disruptive behavior, such as interruptions or excessive talking, on the whole class.

3. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

A Projective play with puppets is more useful to students than is direct play.

B Students act out specified situations in direct play with puppets.

C Puppets should be available to teachers of all elementary classes.

D Students can learn a great deal through play with puppets.

Adapted from an education journal:

A normal developmental stage that many children go through is "possessiveness." They may cling to objects they have and want objects that others have.

Preschools provide an ideal climate for helping children overcome this natural tendency. Children in preschools are not only urged to share, they must share because of the limited resources available at most preschools. Thus, preschools can provide experiences that may partially diminish children's emphasis on possessions.

4. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

A Attending preschools can help reduce children's tendencies to be possessive.

B Children go through many developmental stages to which teachers must be attentive.

C Many children want objects that they do not have.

D Preschools are the primary vehicles for shaping children's social attitudes.

Adapted from a student textbook:

Charades is a game in which players must communicate without words. Many societies and individuals also communicate without speaking. Sign language, for example, is one way of communicating without speaking. Long ago, American Indian tribes shared a system of hand signs. By using these hand signs, people from different tribes could communicate with each other even though they spoke different languages. Deaf people also use sign language to communicate with each other and with people who can hear. Deaf people often use "finger spelling" as well as "signing." In finger spelling, words are formed by making letters one-by-one with the fingers of one hand. Signing involves the making of a picture or sign with one or two hands for each word or idea. Such nonverbal communication strategies are quite sophisticated and elegant.

5. Which of the following is the best statement of the main idea of this selection?

- **A** Charades is a game in which you have to act out something without speaking.
- **B** The use of words can actually limit our ability to communicate with each other.
- **C** Spoken language is the most advanced communication system available.
- **D** There are effective ways that individuals can communicate without speaking.

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The answers for practice test are No. 1: C, No. 2: A, No. 3: D, No. 4: A, No. 5: D.

Item 1 describes two ways of analyzing staff development programs for teachers and suggests that such procedures could help to increase the "productivity and benefits" of the programs' activities. Thus, the main idea is best stated in answer C, "An analysis of staff development programs for teachers could improve the programs' utility." Answer C is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answer A, "Teachers should receive continuing education credits for participating in staff development activities," is an **irrelevant** answer choice because continuing education credits are not mentioned in the passage. Answer B, "Staff development programs for teachers have experienced a decline in popularity in recent years," is an **inaccurate** answer choice because the first sentence in the passage states that such programs have become "increasingly popular" and, hence, contradicts this answer choice. Answer D, "A survey of teachers' staff development needs should be conducted in all schools," is too **narrow** in scope to be the main idea. It only discusses one of the two recommended analysis procedures and, therefore, cannot be the main idea of the entire passage.

Item 2 discusses ways in which teachers can gather information about individual students in order to make effective decisions about helping those students learn. This content is best summarized in answer A, which is, therefore, the correct answer choice. This answer choice states, "When making decisions about student learning, teachers can use many sources to gather information about individual students." Answer B, "Homework assignments and teacher-made tests provide teachers with a good deal of information about their students," is too **narrow** in scope to be the correct main idea statement because it only mentions two of the several student information sources mentioned in the passage. It does not combine a set of facts to provide a central message. Answer C, "Because teachers need to make many decisions, they could benefit from extensive training in decision-making techniques," is an **irrelevant** answer choice. Training in decision-making techniques is not mentioned in the selection. Answer D, "Standardized tests are not particularly useful sources of information about students," is an **inaccurate** answer choice because it contradicts information contained in the passage.

Item 3 describes how two types of puppet play can be used to enhance student learning. The correct answer choice is D, "Students can learn a great deal through play with puppets." This statement effectively summarizes the central idea of the passage. Answer A is an **irrelevant** answer choice because it states, "Projective play with puppets is more useful to students than is direct play," when no such comparison is made in the selection. Answer B, "Students act out specified situations in direct play with puppets," is an **inaccurate** answer choice. The second sentence of the passage states that in direct play children are encouraged to play without specific settings. Answer C, "Puppets should be available to teachers of all elementary classes," is another **irrelevant** answer choice. This idea does not appear in the reading selection.

Item 4 discusses how attending preschool helps children reduce their tendencies toward possessiveness. Answer A, "Attending preschools can help reduce children's tendencies to be possessive," is the correct answer choice because it accurately summarizes that concept. Answer B, "Children go through many developmental stages to which teachers must be attentive," is too broad because the reading passage only describes one developmental stage. Answer C, "Many children want objects that they do not have," is too **narrow** in scope to be the main idea statement of the passage. It describes one manifestation of possessiveness in children; it does not mention the effects of preschool on this tendency. Answer D, "Preschools are the primary vehicles for shaping children's social attitudes," is **irrelevant**. The passage only discusses one development stage, not social attitudes.

Item 5 discusses ways of communicating without speaking. This main idea is best summarized in answer D, "There are effective ways that individuals can communicate without speaking." Answer D is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Although it paraphrases the first sentence in the selection, answer A, "Charades is a game in which you have to act out something without speaking," is too **narrow** in scope to be the main idea statement. Remember, the first sentence in a passage does not necessarily state the main idea of the selection to follow. In this case, for example, the first sentence serves as a "lead-in" to the central message, not as the central message itself. Answer B, "The use of words can actually limit our ability to communicate with each other," is an **irrelevant** answer choice because this idea is not mentioned in the selection. Answer C, "Spoken language is the most advanced communication system available," is an **irrelevant** answer choice because the passage does not discuss how advanced spoken language is as a communication system.

Summary

Finding the main idea of a reading selection requires several reading comprehension skills. You must study the reading passage carefully to determine its most important points. After you read the selection, decide for yourself what you think the main idea of the passage is. Then, read the answer choices carefully. Read every answer choice, even if you think you have already found the correct answer. Any choice that contains information that contradicts the reading passage or that contains information that cannot be found in the reading passage can be eliminated—it is not the correct answer. In addition, an answer choice that contains only a single detail or a single point from the selection is too narrow. The main idea must summarize the central message of the selection. It is also possible to find answer choices that are too general. The correct choice must describe the important message of the selection; it should not go beyond it. In general, the correct answer will be the one that best answers the question, "What is this reading selection trying to say?"

JOB-RELATED VOCABULARY

Most professions have a specialized vocabulary to describe the concepts and activities that are of particular relevance to the work in that profession. Education is no exception. A thorough understanding of the vocabulary related to education is essential if educators are to comprehend the professional literature of their field. Because the job-related vocabulary of education is essential to your best performance as an educator, knowledge of education-related terms is tested on the TECAT.

How the Skill is Measured

There are 10 job-related vocabulary items in the TECAT. For each job-related vocabulary question on the TECAT, there will be a brief reading selection containing an underlined term. Below the selection will be a question that asks, "Which of the following is the best definition of (identified term) as used above?" There will be four answer choices. Only one will be correct.

Skill Analysis

To answer job-related vocabulary items, first determine the term to be defined. Consider how you would define the term. Then, read each answer choice carefully, and select the one that best defines the term that is underlined both in the reading selection and in the question.

Although the term will be drawn from a selection, the selection will not provide clues that can help you define the term. In selecting the best definition of the term, be sure not to make your choice until you have read and considered all of the possible answers. If you are uncertain about the correct answer, start by eliminating the choices that you know are incorrect. Then, try to select the best answer from the remaining choices. Incorrect answer choices will be one of the following types:

Incorrect. An incorrect definition defines one of the eligible job-related vocabulary terms, but not the one used in the reading selection.

Irrelevant. An irrelevant definition defines a job-related vocabulary term or education concept not eligible for testing.

As with most vocabulary-based skills, there is no substitute for learning the definitions of the terms involved. In the case of the TECAT, this requires learning the definitions of any of the 82 words or phrases that are eligible for testing on the TECAT's job-related vocabulary items. These words and phrases, presented below, were selected on the basis of recommendations by an advisory committee of Texas educators and citizens. The committee recommended only the inclusion of terminology important for Texas educators in carrying out their routine responsibilities.

Without doubt, you will be familiar with many of the words and phrases contained in the list of TECAT-eligible job-related vocabulary. For any word or phrase with which you are not familiar, look up its definition, then study it so that you can define each word or phrase listed.

One possible source of definitions is a colleague who is knowledgeable regarding such terminology. Another source is one of the several sets of definitions provided by various institutions and professional organizations. A third source of suitable definitions is standard textbooks in the field of education. The bulk of the TECAT job-related terminology will be defined in one or more of the following types of textbooks:

- Educational psychology
- Curriculum
- Measurement
- Administration
- Special education

Locate copies of up-to-date texts in these fields (from your school/district professional library, a college library, or a public library). The majority of the TECAT terms will be found in such texts.

Although job-related terms may be defined in different ways by different people, the definition on which each TECAT item is based will be a common, generally accepted definition of the word or phrase. It should be noted, of course, that you must be ready to identify definitions that are not expressed in exactly the same words as the definitions you have used. For example, if you have (for your own study purposes) defined the term "pretest" as "a test given to students prior to instruction," then you should recognize that the following definition is also a perfectly acceptable definition for the same term: "an assessment of students that is administered before an instructional sequence." These two definitions are, in essence, equivalent. Although the wordings differ in minor ways, the central thrust of the two definitions is identical.

As you consider each of the four answer choices in an effort to identify the correct definition, don't forget that there may be incorrect answers that are appropriate definitions of other common educational terms. Thus, don't assume that merely because you encounter a familiar definition, it is a correct definition of the term to which the item refers.

The words and phrases eligible for testing in the TECAT items dealing with job-related vocabulary are:

Ability grouping
Absenteeism
Accreditation
Achievement
Achievement tests
Aptitude
Aptitude tests
Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee
Assessment
Bilingual education
Classroom management
Certification
Compensatory education
Comprehension
Computer literacy
Continuing contract
Criterion
Criterion-referenced test
Curriculum
Diagnostic
Disadvantaged
Discipline management
Discovery learning
English as a Second Language (ESL)
Evaluation
Expel
Extracurricular
Extrinsic motivation
Feedback
Formative (evaluation)
Gifted and talented
Grade equivalent score
Guardian
Guided practice
Handicapped
Homebound instruction
Independent practice
Individualized Educational Program (IEP)
Individualized instruction
In-school suspension
Inservice (education)
Instructional objective
Intrinsic motivation
Learning disability
Learning resources center (LRC)
Lecture method
Lesson plan
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
Mainstreaming
Mastery learning
Mean (average)
Modeling (behavioral and instructional)
Monitor (as a verb)
Multicultural
Normal curve
Norm-referenced test
Objective test
Pacing (instruction)
Peer tutor
Percentile
Posttest
Pretest
Probationary contract
Raw score
Readiness skill
Reinforcement
Remediation
Retention
Scope and sequence (of instruction)
Self-concept
Self-paced (instruction)
Social promotion
Socioeconomic status
Special education
Standardized test
Summative (evaluation)
Suspension
Team teaching
Term contract
Time-on-task
Truancy
Vocational educational

Sample Items

Read the following item and select the best definition of the underlined term.

> Adapted from a memorandum:
>
> The steps involved in a suspension are described in the district's procedures manual.

1. Which of the following is the best definition of suspension as used above?

   A Students are retained in the same grade for an additional year.

   B Students are required to remain on school grounds after school.

   C Students are not permitted to attend school for a specified period of time.

   D Students are transferred to a different school district.

This question requires you to find the definition of **suspension.** Suspension is a disciplinary action that prevents a student from attending school for a certain period of time. This action is best described in answer C, "Students are not permitted to attend school for a specified period of time." Therefore, C is the correct answer choice.

We will now examine the remaining three answer choices. Answer A is an **incorrect** answer choice because it defines another eligible term, **retention.** Answer B is an **irrelevant** answer choice that defines an educational term not eligible for testing, **detention.** Answer D is also an **irrelevant** answer choice. It discusses a type of transfer, not suspension.

Remember, the sentence in which a vocabulary term is used will not provide clues as to the definition of the term. Do not select a definition simply because it makes sense in the sentence. Make sure the answer you select is the best definition of the term.

Now, read the following item and select the best definition.

> Adapted from an education textbook:
>
> Teachers often find that they must change their lesson plans based on student needs.

2. Which of the following is the best definition of lesson plans as used above?

   A worksheets provided for students to practice new skills

   B outlines indicating what will be taught during each class

   C summaries of the educational goals and recommended services for students with special needs

   D textbooks selected for use in each class

This item asks you to select a definition for the term **lesson plans.** This term is best defined in answer B, "outlines indicating what will be taught during each class." Therefore, answer B is the correct answer choice.

Now, let us examine the other, incorrect, answer choices. Answer A discusses **worksheets** to be completed by students, not lesson plans, created by teachers. It is, therefore, an **irrelevant** answer choice. Answer C is an **incorrect** answer choice; it defines another eligible term, **IEP** (Individualized Educational Program). Answer D, which refers to **textbooks,** is an **irrelevant** definition.

PRACTICE TEST FOR JOB-RELATED VOCABULARY

To test your knowledge of job-related vocabulary terms, answer the following five items. When you have finished, check your answers on page 17. Read the explanations of the answer choices for any item that you missed.

> Adapted from a newspaper/magazine:
>
> It may be advantageous to have the curriculum for the new course established by a committee.

1. Which of the following is the best definition of curriculum as used above?

A a standard established for mastery of a course

B the content to be taught in a course

C the skills required for entry into a course

D a test given at the end of a course

> Adapted from a memorandum:
>
> A staff development workshop on how to monitor a classroom effectively will be offered next month.

2. Which of the following is the best definition of monitor as used above?

A observe class activities and intervene, when necessary, to keep students on track

B plan and arrange the physical characteristics of a classroom

C decorate a classroom with educationally stimulating materials

D plan the particular instructional material to be taught and its order of presentation

> Adapted from an education textbook:
>
> Opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities are important for students.

3. Which of the following is the best definition of extracurricular as used above?

A courses for credit that are selected by students

B events sponsored by the school that do not count toward academic requirements

C projects that can be done in addition to regular school work to earn extra-credit points

D learning on one's own through exploration and discovery

> Adapted from an education textbook:
>
> Students can benefit from proper use of remediation.

4. Which of the following is the best definition of remediation as used above?

A Students are given poor grades if they demonstrate inadequate skills.

B Students are given rewards for satisfactory work.

C Advanced instruction is given to students who are ahead of grade level.

D Instruction is provided to help students catch up to grade level.

Adapted from a memorandum:

Students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are sponsoring a bake sale to buy more equipment for the language lab.

5. Which of the following is the best definition of English as a Second Language (ESL) as used above?

   A classes for students whose primary language is not English

   B classes for students who are native English speakers and who want to become fluent in a foreign language

   C classes to help students improve their English skills by learning a foreign language

   D English classes in which students learn at their own pace

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The answers to the practice test items are No. 1: B, No. 2: A, No. 3: B, No. 4: D, No. 5: A.

Item 1 requires you to select the best definition of **curriculum,** which refers to a planned set of educational experiences. Answer B, "the content to be taught in a course," correctly defines curriculum and is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answer A is an **incorrect** answer choice; it pertains to mastery learning, not curriculum. Curriculum refers to the educational experiences to be provided for students, not to levels of student achievement. Answer C is an **irrelevant** answer choice that defines the ineligible educational term prerequisite. Answer D is **incorrect**; it defines another eligible term, posttest.

Item 2 asks for the best definition of **monitor** as used in the boxed sentence. This term is best defined in answer A, "observe class activities and intervene, when necessary, to keep students on track." Thus, answer A is correct. Answer B is an **incorrect** answer choice that describes one aspect of classroom management. Although monitoring a classroom is a part of classroom management, arranging the furniture in a classroom is not the same as monitoring. Answer C is also **irrelevant.** Like answer B, answer C refers to the physical environment in a classroom; this is not relevant to the task of monitoring students' behavior. Answer D is an **incorrect** answer choice; it describes the production of a lesson plan, not the action of monitoring classroom activities.

Item 3 requests the best definition of **extracurricular.** This term refers to activities that are "outside of the curriculum." As we saw in practice item 1, curriculum refers to a planned set of educational experiences. Therefore, extracurricular activities are activities that occur for reasons other than fulfilling academic requirements. Answer B, "events sponsored by the school that do not count toward academic requirements," best describes this concept. Thus, answer B is correct. Answer A is an **irrelevant** answer choice. It defines the term electives, which is not eligible to be tested on the TECAT. Answer C is an **irrelevant** definition that describes extra-credit work. Answer D is an **incorrect** answer; it defines discovery learning.

Item 4 asks you to select the answer choice that best exemplifies the meaning of **remediation.** This term refers to instruction that is designed to raise students' levels of competence to that of their peers. This concept appears in answer D, "Instruction is provided to help students catch up to grade level," which is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answer A is an **irrelevant** answer choice that discusses a grading policy. Answer B, an **incorrect** answer choice, describes the term reinforcement. Answer C is also an **incorrect** answer choice.

Item 5 requires you to define the term **English as a Second Language (ESL).** ESL classes are for students whose primary language is not English. This definition appears in answer A, "Classes for students whose primary language is not English," which is, therefore, correct. Answers B and C are both **irrelevant** answer choices. Answer D is an **incorrect** answer choice describing an example of individualized instruction.

Summary

The key to the job-related items is an understanding of the eligible vocabulary terms. For a more complete understanding of each term, you may need to refer to educational materials. When you answer job-related vocabulary items, read every answer choice carefully and select the best definition of the term.

FACT AND OPINION

An essential reading skill is the ability to distinguish between **facts** and **opinions.** A **fact** is a statement that can be proved by evidence such as observation, measurement, or testing. Based on the evidence, everyone should be able to determine that a fact is accurate. For example, the statement "Three students were absent from Ms. Jefferson's third-period class yesterday" is a fact because it can be supported by concrete evidence.

In contrast, an **opinion** involves a belief or a value judgment. An opinion cannot be proved or disproved through observation, measurement, or testing. So, for example, the statement, "Ms. Jefferson's class is interesting" is an opinion because some people may agree with the statement, while others may disagree. There is no way to prove whether the statement is true or false.

Because being able to distinguish between facts and opinions is important when you evaluate the information you read, this skill is measured on the TECAT. The information presented in this self-study guide should help you distinguish between facts and opinions and, thereby, improve your score on the TECAT.

How the Skill is Measured

There are 10 fact and opinion items on the reading section of the TECAT. Each of these test items consists of a reading selection followed by a question that asks either, "Which one of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?" or "Which one of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?"

This question is followed by four answer choices, only one of which is correct. The correct answer choice is a fact or an opinion (depending on which one the question asks for) that is stated in the selection. Thus, you will have to look for two things when you choose your answer. First, did you select the proper type [illegible]ment (fact or opinion)? Second, is the statement you selected contained in the selection? As you will see, facts or opinions that are **not** stated in the passage **cannot** be correct.

Skill Analysis

The types of incorrect answer choices differ, depending on whether the question requires you to identify a fact or an opinion. First, we will review the possible answer choices for facts. The correct answer choice will be a fact that is stated in the reading selection. There are three types of incorrect answer choices for fact questions:

An inaccurate fact. A factual statement that **contradicts** information presented in the reading selection cannot be the correct answer. Therefore, even if you determine that an answer choice sounds like a fact, you must still check that it is consistent with what is stated in the selection.

An irrelevant fact. An answer choice that presents information that is not stated in the reading selection cannot be correct, even if it is a fact. Make sure that you can find your answer choice **in the selection.**

An opinion. If the test question asks you for a fact, any answer choice that is an opinion (value judgment, belief or personal view) will be incorrect. Every reading selection will include at least one fact and one opinion. Thus, an answer choice that expresses an opinion can be taken directly from the reading passage and still be incorrect.

Half of the questions in the fact and opinion section of the TECAT require you to choose an **opinion.** When identifying an opinion, be on the lookout for clue words that signal a belief or a value judgment. Verbs such as **believe, feel,** and **think** generally indicate a belief. Adjectives such as **good, bad,** and **beautiful** express value judgments, as do terms such as **should, must,** and **ought to.** Words such as **probably, possibly,** and **likely** also frequently indicate opinions.

The correct answer choice for an opinion item will be an opinion that is presented in the reading selection. There are three types of incorrect answer choices for opinion questions.

A contradicted opinion. This type of answer choice will express an opinion, but it will be contradicted by an opinion presented in the reading selection. Be careful that the opinion you select agrees with an opinion stated in the reading selection.

An irrelevant opinion. An answer choice of this type will express an opinion that is not contained in the reading selection. You can avoid such incorrect answers by making sure that you have located your answer choice somewhere in the reading selection.

A fact. When a test question asks for an opinion, any answer choice that is a fact will be incorrect. Be sure that the answer you select as an opinion is a statement of personal belief or judgment.

After reading the selection, read the test question carefully to determine whether you should choose a fact or an opinion. (Be sure not to overlook the upper case letters spelling FACT or OPINION in the question.) Next, consider each answer choice. Avoid any answer choices that are not of the type (fact or opinion) required by the test question. Also, avoid any answer choices that are contradicted by the selection or that are not stated in the selection. Make sure that you examine **every** answer choice, even if one of the first answers appears to be correct. If you are having difficulty selecting an answer, eliminate the choices that are clearly incorrect, then select your answer from the remaining choices. When you select your answer, check that it is of the appropriate type (fact or opinion) and that you can find it **in the selection.** Be careful not to let your own opinions or point of view affect your selection of an answer choice. Base your decision only on the information presented in the selection.

Sample Items

Read this selection and choose an answer that is a fact from the selection.

> Adapted from a newspaper/magazine:
>
> The corporate classroom is quietly becoming a third leg of the education system in the United States. United States companies currently train and educate nearly 8 million people. This figure is almost as large as the total enrollment of America's four-year colleges and universities. The courses offered through these corporate programs range from remedial English to nuclear engineering. Some subjects, such as language and accounting, overlap with those taught in traditional schools. However, subject areas not currently incorporated into conventional curricula are also taught. The most attractive feature of these corporate schools is that employee-students attend school for free. Furthermore, some students can continue to receive a full salary while learning.

1. Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

- **A** Most classes offered through corporate schools are not offered in four-year colleges or universities.
- **B** Employee-students do not have to pay to attend corporate schools.
- **C** Going to a corporate school is an ideal way for adults to continue their education.
- **D** More students are currently trained by United States companies than by four-year colleges and universities.

Upon careful reading, you can see that this test question asks you to find a fact from the selection. There are several facts stated in this reading passage, but only one of them appears as an answer choice. The second-to-last sentence in the passage states that "employee-students attend [corporate schools] for free." This fact is paraphrased in answer B, "Employee-students do not have to pay to attend corporate schools." Thus, answer B is the correct answer choice.

We will now examine the three remaining answers, A, C, and D. Answer A, "Most classes offered through corporate schools are not offered in four-year colleges or universities," is an **irrelevant** fact; it is a fact that is not stated in the passage. Although the fifth and sixth sentences in the selection state that some areas of instruction offered in corporate schools are not taught in traditional colleges and universities, it does not state that this is true of most classes. Answer C, "Going to a corporate school is an ideal way for adults to continue their education," is an **opinion.** You can tell that it is an opinion because of the word "ideal." What some people consider to be ideal may not be considered to be ideal by others. Thus, this statement is a value judgment and, hence, an opinion. Because the question asks for a fact, answer C is incorrect. Answer D, "More students are currently trained by United States companies than by four-year colleges and universities," is an **inaccurate** fact. The second and third sentences in the selection state that corporate schools train almost as many students as do colleges and universities, **not** more.

Now consider the following selection and find the answer that states an opinion expressed in the selection.

> Adapted from an education textbook:
>
> An instructional method suitable in one situation may be quite unsuitable in another. For example, the way that teachers function in open classrooms varies tremendously from how they function in highly structured classrooms. Even within a classroom, teachers must continuously adapt to the broad range of needs and skills of their students. Flexibility is a necessary quality of an effective teacher. Teachers possessing this trait should be admired. There are millions of teachers in this country. Each one must arrive at a unique way to accommodate the instructional challenges that are faced.

2. Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?

- **A** Similar instructional strategies should be used by teachers in all settings.
- **B** Teaching in open classrooms is more enjoyable than teaching in highly structured classrooms.
- **C** There are millions of teachers in the United States.
- **D** Flexibility is an essential quality of an effective teacher.

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This test question requires you to select an opinion from the selection. Answer D, "Flexibility is an essential quality of an effective teacher," is the correct answer choice. This sentence is a close paraphrase of the fourth sentence in the passage: "Flexibility is a necessary quality of an effective teacher." You can tell that this statement expresses an opinion because of the value judgments implied by words such as "necessary," "essential," and "effective."

Now let's consider the incorrect responses. Answer A, "Similar instructional strategies should be used by teachers in all settings," expresses a **contradicted** opinion. The passage expresses the opposite view. Answer B, "Teaching in open classrooms is more enjoyable than teaching in highly structured classrooms," is an **irrelevant** opinion because the passage does not compare how enjoyable it is to teach in different kinds of classrooms. Answer C, "There are millions of teachers in the United States," is a **fact** from the passage (second-to-last sentence). Remember that the question asks for an opinion.

PRACTICE TEST FOR FACT AND OPINION

On the following pages you will find a practice test that will help you see if you can distinguish between facts and opinions. When you have completed all five items, check your answers on page 22. If you missed any items, read why the answer you chose was incorrect and why the correct answer choice best answers the test question.

Adapted from a student textbook:

The language used in writing a report is often impersonal and formal. Some writers use language that is stuffy and far too technical for readers to understand. A report should awaken a reader's interest, not put the reader to sleep. The most critical part of a report is the introduction, or the first part, of the report. From the introduction, the reader forms an impression and often decides whether or not to continue reading. One sure way to lose readers is to write elaborate introductions. Instead, writers should jump right into the subject.

1. Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

A Long, wordy introductions are boring to read.

B The most important part of a written report is the conclusion.

C The beginning of a report is known as the introduction.

D All students are required to write reports at some point during their education.

Adapted from a memorandum:

To: Teachers and Students
From: Mr. Brock, School Librarian
Subject: Book Survey

As your school librarian I am delighted to inform you of some good news. We have received additional funds this year to purchase new books and magazines for our facility. Rather than selecting books and magazines myself, I have decided to conduct a survey of students and teachers. The purpose of the survey is to collect your ratings on a list of books and magazines that we might purchase. Based on the results of the survey, I will select a combination of books and magazines that we can afford.

Please return your completed surveys to the library by next Friday. This is a tremendous opportunity to expand our resources and improve the library. Your input is valuable and will guide me in making the final selections.

2. Which of the following statements is a FACT presented **in the selection**?

A The school library was given additional money to buy new books and magazines.

B The purchase of new resources should greatly improve the school library.

C This is the first time in several years that the library has been able to purchase new books.

D The completed surveys should be returned to the principal's office by next Friday.

Adapted from an education journal:

During the adolescent years, students' peer groups tend to influence their activities, behavior, attitudes, and academic goals. Peer influence is generally strongest at the secondary level. Many adults say that it is nearly impossible to influence students' selection of friends and peer groups. Nonetheless, teachers should encourage students to be selective in their choice of friends. Within the school setting, the availability of a variety of extracurricular activities and clubs allows students to choose their peer groups more carefully. Students who select peers with the same goals and interests generally do better in school both academically and socially.

3. Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?

    A Teachers should encourage students to choose their friends carefully.

    B Peer group influence tends to be strongest at the elementary level.

    C Schools should sponsor more after-school activities to help students make friends.

    D Parents report that they signficantly influence their children's choice of friends.

Adapted from a teacher's manual:

This mathematics series includes both a student textbook and individual student workbooks. The series is designed to help elementary students learn basic concepts and skills in mathematics. The program has two major emphases. The first emphasis is to help students establish mastery of fundamental skills and operations in mathematics. Second, and perhaps more important, the materials are intended to promote students' abilities to apply basic skills to a variety of novel problem-solving situations.

The series is built on the belief that computational skills form a necessary base for students. However, such skills must be applied if they are to be useful. Therefore, the program introduces problem-solving techniques in a step-by-step manner. Illustrations of how these techniques can be applied to real-life situations are presented in both the student textbook and the student workbook.

4. Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?

    A This mathematics series consists of both a student textbook and a student workbook.

    B The second emphasis of the mathematics series is more important than the first.

    C It is just as important for students to develop good mathematics skills as it is for them to develop good reading skills.

    D Mathematics would be the favorite subject of most students if teachers used practical examples when introducing new ideas.

Adapted from an education journal:

> There are several note-taking techniques that can improve students' performance in school. First, students should be encouraged to take notes that stress the main idea of a lecture. A recent research study demonstrated that this type of note-taking is associated with better recall of factual information. Many people also believe that taking detailed notes can help students improve their performance. By supplementing their main idea notes with details, students can gain full benefit from their note-taking. One thing that students should not do while taking notes is to attempt to integrate information as it is being presented. Trying to relate lecture information to previous knowledge while taking notes is extremely difficult and can confuse students.

5. Which of the following statements is an OPINION presented **in the selection**?

   A Many research studies have established the benefits of proper note-taking practices.

   B Note-taking is a waste of time if students do not use their notes to review for a test.

   C It is difficult to take notes and relate lecture information to previous knowledge at the same time.

   D Writing down the details of a lecture is of little value in note-taking.

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The answers for the practice test are: No. 1: C, No. 2: A, No. 3: A, No. 4: B, and No. 5: C.

Item 1 is about the language used by writers in reports, and it asks you to identify a **fact** from the selection. Answer C, "The beginning of a report is known as the introduction," is a fact that is presented in the fourth sentence of the selection. It is a statement of fact because it simply states something that is true; it does not express a value judgment or a belief. Answer C is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answer A, "Long, wordy introductions are boring to read," is a statement of opinion; the adjective "boring" indicates a value judgment because what one person considers to be boring may not be boring to another person. Field-test data revealed, however, that many examinees felt that this was the correct answer, probably because it seemed to follow from the general tone of the selection. Do not make this mistake. A statement is not a fact merely because the author seems to believe it. Answer B, "The most important part of a written report is the conclusion," is also an **opinion** because the term "most important" indicates a value judgment. Furthermore, this opinion is contradicted in the fourth sentence of the passage. (If the question asks for a fact, a statement of opinion can never be the correct answer choice—whether that opinion is supported or contradicted in the reading selection.) Answer D, "All students are required to write reports at some point in their education," is an **irrelevant** fact; the passage does not mention students.

Item 2 discusses funds for library materials and requires you to select a **fact** presented in the reading passage. Answer A, "The school library was given additional money to buy new books and magazines," is the correct answer choice. It is a statement of fact that is presented in the second sentence of the memorandum. Answer B, "The purchase of new resources should greatly improve the school library," is an **opinion.** In this sentence, the word "should" indicates an expectation about something that is **likely** to happen, not something that necessarily will. Answer C, "This is the first time in several years that the library has been able to purchase new books," is an **irrelevant** fact. Such information does not appear in the passage. Answer D, "The completed surveys should be returned to the principal's office by next Friday," is an **opinion** (note the clue word "should") that is contradicted in the passage (second paragraph, first sentence).

Item 3 discusses adolescents and peer influence. You are asked to select an **opinion** from the passage. The correct answer is A, "Teachers should encourage students to choose their friends carefully." Again, the clue word indicating a statement of opinion is "should." The fourth sentence in the passage presents this opinion. Answer B, "Peer group influence tends to be strongest at the elementary level," is clearly **contradicted** in the second sentence of the passage. Answer C, "Schools should sponsor more after-school activities to help students make friends," is an **irrelevant** opinion because, although the passage states the social value of extracurricular activities for students, it does not indicate a need for more after-school activities. Answer D, "Parents report that they significantly influence their children's choice of friends," is a statement of **fact** that is irrelevant because parents are not specifically mentioned in the passage.

Item 4, concerning a series of mathematics texts and workbooks, requires you to select an **opinion** from the passage. Answer B, "The second emphasis of the mathematics series is more important than the first," is the correct answer choice. When someone states that something is "more important" than something else, a value judgment—an opinion—is being expressed. This opinion is supported in the last sentence of the first paragraph. Answer A, "This mathematics series consists of both a student textbook and a student workbook," is a statement of **fact.** Although this fact is presented in the passage, remember that the question asks for an opinion. Although answer C, "It is just as important for students to develop good mathematics," is an opinion, reading skills are not mentioned in the passage. Therefore, answer C is an **irrelevant** opinion. Answer D, "Mathematics would be the favorite subject of most students if teachers used practical examples when introducing new ideas," also expresses an opinion. However, as with answer C, this opinion is not expressed in the selection. Therefore, Answer D is also an **irrelevant** opinion.

Item 5 discusses effective note-taking techniques and asks that you select an **opinion** from the selection. The correct answer is C, "It is difficult to take notes and relate lecture information to previous knowledge at the same time." What is difficult for one person may not be difficult for another. An assessment of difficulty is, therefore, a value judgment, and answer C expresses an opinion. This opinion is presented in the last sentence of the reading selection. Answer A, "Many research studies have established the benefits of proper note-taking practices," is a **fact.** Furthermore, the passage does not even make this point. It only describes one study. Remember, whether or not a fact statement is supported by the reading selection, it cannot answer a question requiring a statement of opinion. Answer B, "Note-taking is a waste of time if students do not use their notes to review for a test," is an **irrelevant** opinion. Although the term "a waste of time" does reflect a value judgment and, thus, an opinion, tests are not mentioned in the passage. Answer D, "Writing down the details of a lecture is of little value in note-taking," is an **inaccurate** opinion. This opinion is clearly contradicted in the fifth sentence of the passage, which states that there are benefits to be gained from writing details.

Summary

Field-test data show that the fact and opinion items are among the most difficult test items on the TECAT. Even so, distinguishing fact from opinion is a very important skill, and one that can be developed with practice. When you work on a fact and opinion item on the TECAT, first read the entire reading selection with great care. Keep in mind that the correct answer will always be contained in the reading selection. After you have read and understood the selection, then read the question. Be sure you know whether you are looking for a fact or an opinion. Next, read each of the answer choices. As you read each choice, decide whether it is a fact or an opinion. Look for clue words that may indicate that a statement is an opinion. Identify facts by considering whether evidence could be obtained to prove the truth of a statement.

Remember, if an answer choice is contradicted by the selection or does not appear in the selection, it cannot be correct. Keep in mind that whether or not you personally agree with the answer you select is not important. To do well on this skill on the TECAT, find the answer choice that is a FACT (or OPINION) presented **in the selection.**

REFERENCE USAGE

Knowledge of how to use reference materials is essential for educators, both in teaching reference skills to students and in obtaining reference information for themselves. Because these skills are important for educators, reference usage skills are measured on the TECAT. The Skill Analysis section for this skill highlights common errors that people make when using reference materials. The purpose of this analysis is not only to help you improve your score on the TECAT, but to help you improve your reference usage skills in general.

How the Skill is Measured

There are 10 reference usage items on the TECAT. Eight of these items ask you to use an excerpt from a reference source to locate a particular piece of information. The remaining two items ask you to select the type of reference tool that can be used to locate a specified type of information. For all reference usage items, you will need to be familiar with the following reference tools:

1. class schedules (teacher and student)
2. tables
3. graphs
4. library card catalogues
5. dictionaries
6. standardized test guides
7. thesauri
8. curriculum guides/frameworks
9. encyclopedias
10. *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*
11. tables of contents (from professional journals, teachers' manuals and guides, college textbooks, and student textbooks)
12. indexes (from professional journals, teachers' manuals and guides, college textbooks, and student textbooks)
13. bibliographies (from professional journals, teachers' manuals and guides, college textbooks, and student textbooks)

If you are unfamiliar with any of these sources, you should be able to find examples of most of them in a school library, public library, or college library.

Items that require you to locate information in a reference source provide an excerpt from a reference source and ask a question that must be answered using information provided in the source. Items that require you to select a reference ask which reference source is the best one to use to locate specific information. Four answer choices follow each question. For questions requiring you to **use a reference source,** the correct answer will accurately identify the information asked for in the question. For questions requiring you to **select a reference** source, the correct answer will be the name of the reference source that provides the type of information requested by the question.

Skill Analysis

It is important for you to make certain that you are familiar with each of the 13 reference tools listed above. If you are not familiar with an eligible reference tool, ask a librarian for help. If you need to become familiar with curriculum guides or standardized-test guides, you can usually obtain such materials through your school district office. It should be noted, however, that in preparation for the TECAT you will need only to become familiar with such guides in a general way.

Even if you are familiar with the eligible reference sources, you should always read the selection, the question, and the answer choices with great care in order to successfully answer a reference usage test item. Most people have problems with these items because they are not careful enough.

To answer a test item that requires you to use a reference source, first look briefly at the excerpt from the reference source. Then **carefully read the test question.** Next return to the excerpt from the reference source to find the correct answer. The correct answer must be information that is directly stated in the reference source. Be certain to double-check that you have selected the exact information requested in the question. Most errors in this skill area can be avoided by taking your time.

There are three categories of errors that are frequently made in locating reference information. The incorrect answer choices for **using-a-reference-source** items will be based on these error types:

Adjacent information. Sometimes when people use a reference source they carelessly select information that is adjacent to (next to) the information they are actually looking for. Be particularly careful to select the information you need, and not something that appears next to it.

Inappropriate information. Reference sources may contain words and numbers that look almost the same or that have meanings that are similar. When you use reference sources, you must be certain to find the exact information you need. Therefore, one of the types of incorrect answers on reference source items will be information that is similar in appearance or meaning to the correct answer. As with adjacent information, people often select such an incorrect answer choice because they do not take enough time to check their answers.

Irrelevant information. Sometimes information in the reference source that does not answer the question and is neither adjacent nor similar to the correct answer is mistakenly selected as an answer. Such unrelated responses can often be avoided by carefully reading each reference usage question on the TECAT.

To prepare for TECAT reference usage items in which you must **select a reference source,** review the most common purpose (or purposes) of each of the 13 reference sources eligible for inclusion on the TECAT. These are:

1. **class schedule:** a program listing a teacher's or student's classes during each period of the school day;
2. **table:** an arrangement of information in rows and columns;
3. **graph:** a diagram that compares variables;
4. **library card catalogue:** a system for finding books in a library;
5. **dictionary:** a book providing definitions and pronunciations of alphabetically arranged words;
6. **standardized test guide:** a booklet providing information about the characteristics of and administration procedures for a particular standardized test;
7. **thesaurus:** a book of words and their synonyms, or words with similar meanings;
8. **curriculum guide/framework:** a district or statewide publication describing objectives to be taught by subject and by grade level;
9. **encyclopedia:** alphabetically arranged by subject, a book or set of volumes providing information in all subject areas;
10. ***Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*:** a set of volumes directing the reader to magazine articles according to topic and date;
11. **table of contents:** appearing at the beginning of a publication, a list of general contents (appearing in the same order in which they appear in the book) and corresponding page numbers;
12. **index:** appearing at the end of a publication, an alphabetized list of specific topics with the numbers of the pages on which they are discussed; and
13. **bibliography:** a list, ordered alphabetically by author's last name, of books and articles that were used as resources in the production of a written work.

An incorrect answer for a reference selection item is a reference tool that is eligible for testing on the TECAT but cannot provide the required information.

By familiarizing yourself with each eligible reference source and by reading each reference usage item carefully, you should have little difficulty with these items on the TECAT.

Sample Items

Examine the following table carefully and locate the information required to answer the question.

Adapted from an education journal:

Fourth-Grade Performance on Spelling List 1 and 2 by Region

Regions	Percent	
	Successful Completion of List 1	Successful Completion of List 2
I — II	52	14
III — IV	50	16
V — VI	53	10
VII — VIII	45	14
IX — X	51	13
XI — XII	50	14
XIII — XIV	50	13
XV — XVI	51	10
XVII — XVIII	50	13
XIX — XX	55	9

According to the table, what percent of fourth-grade students in Regions XV — XVI successfully completed List 1?

A 10 percent

B 13 percent

C 50 percent

D 51 percent

This item asks you to find information supplied in a table. Specifically, you are to identify the percent of fourth-grade students attending schools in Regions XV — XVI who successfully completed Spelling List 1. If you locate "XV-XVI" in the "Regions" column and look across to the first column, labeled "Successful Completion of List 1," you will see the number "51." This number means that 51 percent of the fourth-grade students in Regions XV-XVI successfully completed List 1. Therefore, answer D, "51 percent," is the correct answer choice.

Now let's examine the incorrect answer choices. The percent indicated in Answer A, "10 percent," appears in the row pertaining to Regions XV-XVI; however, it appears in the second column, which provides information concerning List 2, not List 1 as asked for in the question. Answer A indicates a percent that appears next to the percent that correctly answers the question and is, therefore, **adjacent** to the correct answer. Answer B, "13 percent," is an **irrelevant** answer choice because it does not provide the information called for in the question. Answer C, "50 percent," is also **adjacent** to the correct percent but is not correct.

Remember, there is only one correct answer to the question, and that answer can be found in the excerpt from the reference source. When answering test items requiring you to use a reference source, **examine both the question and the excerpt carefully** before you select an answer choice.

Now select the reference source that provides the information described in the following question.

Where could an educator look to find out which pages in a textbook contain information on a particular job?

A a bibliography

B a dictionary

C an index

D the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*

This reference selection item asks you to identify the reference source that would tell an educator which pages in a textbook contain information on a certain topic. The correct answer is C, "an index," which is a book's alphabetical list of topics and their corresponding page numbers.

We will now examine the incorrect answer choices. Answer A, "a bibliography," is not correct because a bibliography is a list of books, not topics. Answer B, "a dictionary," is a book in which words are defined. Answer D, "the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*," is a multivolume index that indicates in which magazine issues you can find articles on particular topics. Thus, none of these three sources can tell an educator which pages in a textbook contain information on a particular job.

PRACTICE TEST FOR REFERENCE USAGE

On the following pages you will find a practice test with which you can test your skill at using and selecting reference sources. Four items test your skill at using specific reference tools and one item requires you to select the appropriate reference source for the type of information requested. Answer each test item. When you have completed all five items, refer to the answer key on page 27. If you missed any items, read why the answer you selected was incorrect.

Adapted from a class schedule:

Schedule of **Maria Gutierrez**
Grade **10**

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
First	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.	P.E.
Second	Art I	Music	Art I	Music	Art I
Third	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry
Fourth	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Fifth	English 101	English 101	English 101	English 101	English 101
Sixth	Biology I	History	Biology I	History	Biology I

1. What is Maria Gutierrez scheduled to take second period on Tuesdays?

A Art I

B Music

C Geometry

D History

Adapted from an index:

P

- Paragraph about
    - an activity, 104
    - a favorite object, 110
    - a machine, 102
    - a personal opinion, 104
- Patterns, 158
- Predicate of a sentence, 132-133
- Pronouns
    - indefinite, 140
    - personal, 141
    - possessive, 142
    - recognition of, 140-142
- Proper noun, 137-138
- Punctuation, 91, 190

2. On which page in this textbook should you look to find out about personal pronouns?

A page 104

B page 140

C page 141

D page 142

Adapted from a bibliography:

Andrews, J.O. (1980). *Developmental considerations in instruction*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Byrd, C. M. and Malone, S. D. (1977). *Educational measurement: An inventory of scales*. San Francisco: Chandler.

Cooks, L. J. (1978). *Instruction and competence*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.

Dansk, H. S. (1979). Designing objectives. *School Review, 79*, 415-422.

Duncan, L. B., Mitchell, S., and Atkinson, R. K. (1983). *Education and the mind*. New York: Harper & Row.

3. Who published the book co-authored by S. D. Malone?

A C. M. Byrd

B J. B. Lippincott

C Nelson-Hall

D Chandler

Adapted from a thesaurus:

CUT, n. **1.** [Derived from the use of a sharp instrument] slash, thrust, gouge, divide, separation, severance, slit, slice, carve, chop, stroke, incision. **2.** [A reduction] decrease, diminution, lessening; see REDUCTION 1. **3.** [The shape] fashion, figure, construction; see FORM 1. **4.** [A section] segment, slice, portion. **5.** [A piece of butchered meat] piece, slice, chunk; see MEAT 2.

Due to a cut in the budget, Moorpark School will be unable to finance any field trips this year.

4. Which group of words in the thesaurus entry means the same thing as the word cut as used in the sentence above?

A group 2

B group 3

C group 4

D group 5

5. Where could an educator read about behavior modification?

- **A** an index
- **B** an encyclopedia
- **C** a thesaurus
- **D** the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The answers to the practice test are No. 1: B, No. 2: C, No. 3: D, No. 4: A, No. 5: B.

Item 1 asks you to examine a student's class schedule to determine what class she is scheduled to take on Tuesdays during second period. The course listed in the space where the period row labeled "Second" and the day column labeled "Tuesday" intersect is "Music." Therefore, answer B, "Music," is the correct answer choice. Answers A, C, and D are all incorrect answer choices because they do not answer the test question. They represent classes that appear in sections other than the section corresponding to Tuesday, second period.

Item 2 requires you to use an excerpt from an index to find the page on which information about personal pronouns can be found. If you find "Pronouns" in the index and then look at the subcategory "personal," you can see that content concerning personal pronouns can be found on page 141. Answer C, "page 141," is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answers A, B, and C are all incorrect answer choices because they represent page numbers that correspond to topics other than "personal pronouns."

Item 3 presents an excerpt from a bibliography and asks you to identify the publisher of a book co-authored by S. D. Malone. S. D. Malone is one of the two authors of the book *Educational measurement: An inventory of scales*. In a bibliography, books and articles are listed alphabetically by author. Following a book's title appears the place where the book was published and the name of the publishing company who published the book. *Educational measurement: An inventory of scales* was published in San Francisco by Chandler. Answer D, "Chandler," is, therefore, the correct answer choice. If you selected answer A, you mistakenly selected S. D. Malone's co-author, "C. M. Byrd," as the publisher of the book they wrote. You may not have read the question carefully enough to see that it asked about the publisher, not the other author. If you selected answer B, "J. B. Lippincott," or answer C, "Nelson-Hall," you chose publishers of other books listed in the bibliography, not publishers of the book specified in the test question.

Item 4 provides a thesaurus entry followed by a sentence. It asks you to select the numbered group of words in the entry that means the same thing as the underlined word, cut. In the sentence that is provided, cut refers to "a cut in the budget." Entry group 2 contains several synonyms for the word "cut" as it is used in the sentence. A "cut" in the budget has the same meaning as a "reduction," "decrease," "diminution," or "lessening" in the budget. Thus, the correct answer is A, "group 2." Answer B, "group 3," is an incorrect answer choice that refers to "the shape" of something, not to a reduction. Answer C, "group 4," refers to the meaning of "cut" that refers to "a section" or "slice." Answer D, "group 5," pertains to meat.

Item 5 asks you to **select** the proper reference source for reading about behavior modification. An encyclopedia is a set of books that are arranged alphabetically in which you can find information about a wide variety of topics including behavior modification. Answer B, "an encyclopedia," is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Answers A, "an index," and D, "the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*," both refer to places where you can find out where you can read about something; they do not provide reading material themselves. Answer C, "a thesaurus," is also an incorrect answer choice. As we saw in the previous item, a thesaurus provides synonyms—words carrying similar meanings. It will indicate where you can learn about a particular subject matter.

Summary

Reviewing your performance on the practice test can help you determine whether you need additional practice with reference usage. You should become familiar with each of the reference tools used in the TECAT. In addition, you must pay close attention to detail and, for some sources, be able to alphabetize accurately.

Reference materials that can be used on the TECAT are listed and described on page 24 of this self-study guide. Examine the list and decide which reference sources you need to examine. Most of the reference tools can be found in a library or in your district's testing or evaluation office.

INFERENCE

Writers frequently imply ideas rather than stating them directly. Because implied ideas may be as important as those that are explicitly stated, a skilled reader must be able to use the skill of inference to figure out something that isn't directly stated. Because being able to draw inferences from reading materials is such an important skill for educators, it is assessed on the TECAT.

How the Skill is Measured

There are five inference items on the TECAT, only half as many as appear in other reading skills. Each inference item presents a reading selection followed by the question, "Which of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?" Four answer choices follow this question. The correct answer is an inference that follows from the information provided in the selection. The incorrect answer choices are statements that are not logically supported by information presented in the selection.

The inference represented by the correct answer will require the examinee to do one of the following:

- make a comparison
- determine a cause or effect
- predict an outcome
- generalize from a series of details
- evaluate or make a judgment
- draw a logical conclusion other than those listed above

Skill Analysis

The TECAT inference items require examinees to read a selection that contains a series of statements that lead logically to a conclusion. Your task is to determine what conclusion can be drawn from the selection. Note that the question asks examinees to identify a conclusion that can reasonably be drawn **from the selection.** You are not asked to select an answer choice that might be true according to your knowledge, beliefs, or professional experience. The answer you select must be based directly on information presented in the selection.

The incorrect answers are drawn from the following three categories:

- **An inaccurate inference,** that is, an inference that is **contradicted** by information in the reading selection.
- **An unsupported inference,** that is, an inference for which **insufficient supporting evidence** is presented in the reading selection.
- **An irrelevant inference,** that is, an inference for which **no evidence** is presented in the reading selection.

The drawing of appropriate inferences from reading selections requires careful reading and logical analysis. To arrive at the proper conclusion, you must think step-by-step about the information that is presented.

Let's briefly consider the six types of inferences on which TECAT items are based.

Making comparisons. An ability to compare objects or individuals along specific dimensions is an important reading skill. Sometimes these relationships are not directly stated and must be inferred. Consider the following example:

Bill is shorter than Juan. Juan is shorter than Tom.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

Bill is shorter than Tom.

Tom
Juan
Bill

Although no information is presented that directly compares Bill and Tom, you can still draw an inference about their relative heights based on information in the selection.

Evaluating and making judgments. Evaluation involves choosing the best alternative according to the characteristics of several options and clear criteria for the best choice. Consider the following example:

Mary is shopping for a new sweater. She is looking for a sweater that is machine-washable and that she can wear with her new skirt. The first sweater that she tried matched her skirt perfectly. However, because it was hand-knit, it cannot be washed by machine. The second sweater that Mary tried looked nice with her skirt and was machine-washable. The third sweater she tried on was machine-washable, but did not quite match the color of her skirt.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

Mary should buy the second sweater.

We can compare the three sweaters by organizing the information presented in the selection in the following way:

	Machine-washable	Goes with skirt
Sweater 1		X
Sweater 2	X	X
Sweater 3	X	

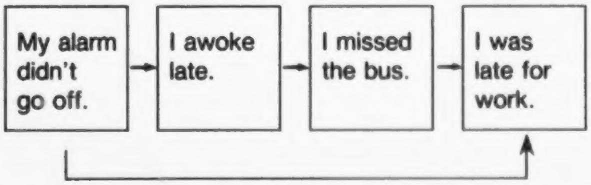
We can see that the second sweater is the only one that fulfills Mary's requirements.

Cause and effect. Another type of inference is based on chains of cause-and-effect events such as the following:

I was late for work because I missed the bus.
I missed the bus because I awoke late.
I awoke late because my alarm did not go off.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

I was late for work because the alarm did not go off.



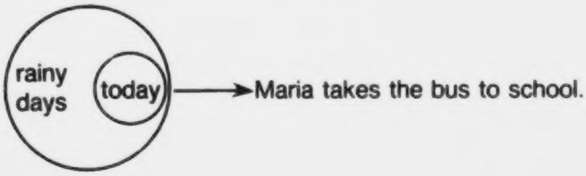
The alarm's failure to go off indirectly caused this person to be late for work.

Predicting outcomes. The prediction of outcomes is related to an understanding of cause and effect. If we know that event A always leads to event B, and Event A happens, then we can reasonably predict that Event B will occur. For example:

When it rains, Maria takes the bus to school. It is raining today.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

Maria will take the bus to school today.



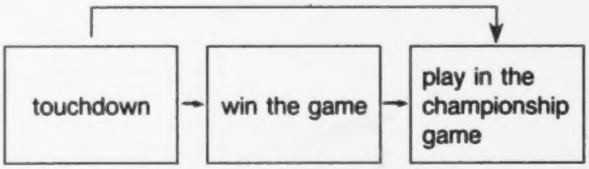
Rainy days cause Maria to take the bus to school.
Today is a rainy day.
Today Maria will take the bus to school.

We can also use chains of cause-and-effect events to predict how something will turn out.

If the football team scores a touchdown, it will win the game. If it wins the game, it will play in the championship game.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

If the football team scores a touchdown,
it will play in the championship game.



Scoring the touchdown would lead to the team's playing the championship game.

Arriving at a generalization. A series of related details can be viewed together as a whole to form a generalization. You must attempt to determine how the details are related in order to arrive at a reasonable generalization.

Details	**Generalization**
Bill never tells lies. Bill always pays his debts. Bill is loyal to his friends.	Bill is responsible.

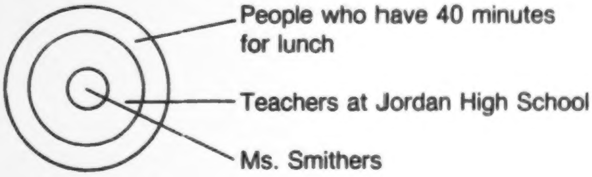
Here we see a series of details about Bill that are related in the sense that they represent something about Bill's character. If we know that a person never tells lies, always pays his debts, and is loyal to his friends, we might reasonably say that the person is a responsible individual. We might also have reasonably inferred that Bill was "trustworthy," "dependable," etc.

Other logical conclusions. In addition to the above types of inferences, one can make various other kinds of logical deductions. In the following two examples, the conclusion involves the process of classification, or assigning something to a category.

> All teachers at Jordan High School have 40 minutes for lunch. Ms. Smithers teaches at Jordan High School.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

Ms. Smithers has 40 minutes for lunch.

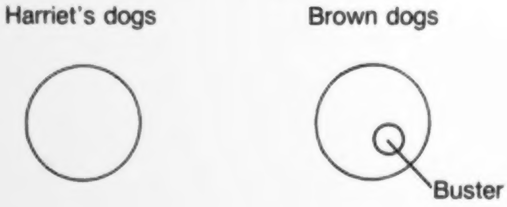

People who have 40 minutes for lunch
Teachers at Jordan High School
Ms. Smithers

Because we know that Ms. Smithers is a teacher at Jordan High School, we know that she has 40 minutes for lunch. In other words, if she belongs to the category of teachers at Jordan High School, she automatically belongs to the category of people who have 40 minutes for lunch.

> None of Harriet's dogs are brown. Buster is a brown dog.

What conclusion can be drawn from this selection?

Buster does not belong to Harriet.



We can see that Buster cannot belong to Harriet. Buster is a brown dog, and none of Harriet's dogs are brown.

Logical thinking processes involved in solving TECAT inference items will be the same as or similar to those we have described.

Sample Items

Read this selection carefully and select the conclusion that can most logically be drawn from the passage.

> Adapted from a teacher's manual:
>
> Reading is a process of communication between the writer and the reader. It involves understanding, evaluating, and applying information. The ultimate goal of reading skills development is to acquire knowledge. This acquisition is dependent on students' ability to comprehend what they read and to grasp new concepts. The development of a rich vocabulary is essential to being able to comprehend written material. Therefore, students should be continually encouraged to work on vocabulary skills. Through practice in structural word analysis and decoding skills, students are able to build their reading vocabulary. Teachers should be certain to emphasize these kinds of skills with students throughout the students' educational career.

Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

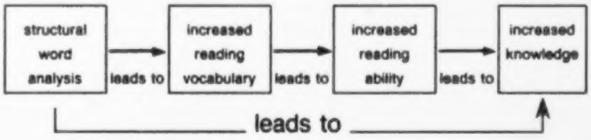
A Vocabulary development activities should be considered optional in the teaching of reading.

B Most students today lack good reading skills.

C Practice in structural word analysis can help students become more knowledgeable.

D Students can improve their vocabulary skills dramatically by reading difficult material.

This passage discusses the development of reading skills. The third sentence states that "the ultimate goal of reading skills development is to acquire knowledge. The passage goes on to say that a good vocabulary is "essential to being able to comprehend written material" (to read, in other words). The second-to-last sentence states, "Through practice in structural word analysis . . . , students are able to build their reading vocabulary." The following logical pattern emerges:



Answer C states, "Practice in structural word analysis can help students become more knowledgeable." This statement accurately expresses the logical conclusion that followed from the selection. Therefore, answer C is the correct answer choice.

Now we will consider the three incorrect answer choices. Answer A, "Vocabulary development activities should be considered optional in the teaching of reading," is contradicted in the second half of the paragraph which state that "The development of a rich vocabulary is essential. . ." Therefore, answer A is **inaccurate**. Answer B, "Most students lack good reading skills," is **irrelevant** because a judgment about the quality of students' reading skills is not made in the selection. Answer D, "Students can improve their vocabulary skills dramatically by reading difficult materials," is also an **irrelevant** statement. The passage does not suggest that reading difficult material helps students improve their vocabulary skills.

Now read the following selection and select the statement that can be logically concluded from the passage.

Adapted from a teacher's manual:

In instructional activities such as reading or preparing written reports, students work independently. It has been shown, however, that students remember information longer when they have to explain it orally to someone else. Nonetheless, many different approaches can be used to teach history. Consider the advantages of each of the following in helping students learn about important people in American history.

1. Each student does independent research about a famous person in history. Students then write a biographical report of the person. The reports may be read by other students during their free time.
2. Each student does independent research about a famous person in history. Then each student, pretending to be that person, is interviewed by the class. Students ask the historic people about their lives, for example, "Lyndon Johnson, what was your most important contribution to our country?" The historic persons respond to such questions.
3. Each student researches a famous person in history. Students then write an essay in which they describe the person's accomplishments and admirable personal qualities.

Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A Students learn more about American history by studying about famous people than by memorizing dates and places.

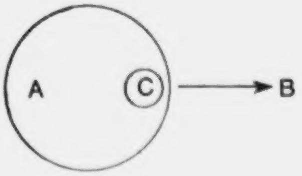
B Students will remember the information longer if they do activity 2.

C Some students perform better in group activities while others perform better on individual work assignments.

D Students usually prepare reports on historic people by working in small groups.

This reading selection presents three instructional activities designed to help students learn about people in United States history. The second sentence says that "students remember information longer when they have to explain it orally to someone else." Activity 2 describes an assignment requiring students to respond orally to questions posed by their classmates. This is the only activity that requires oral explanations of students. Therefore, it is likely to make students remember the information they learn from the assignment for a longer time. These ideas can be logically arranged in the following way:

> Activities requiring students to present information orally (A) cause those students to remember the information longer (B). Activity 2 (C) is an activity requiring students to present information orally (A), and, therefore, will cause students to remember the information longer (B).



All A's cause B.

C is an A.

Therefore, C causes B.

Answer B, "Students will remember the information longer if they do activity 2," is, therefore, the correct answer choice. It expresses an idea that can be logically concluded from the passage.

Consider the incorrect answer choices. Answer A, "Students learn more about American history by studying about famous people than by memorizing dates and places," is an **unsupported** inference. If you selected this answer you may have thought that this claim could be inferred because the only activities mentioned in the passage are about famous Americans. However, because activities involving "memorizing dates and places" are not mentioned in the passage, a comparison between the two types of activities is not supported by the passage. Answer C, "Some students perform better in group activities, while others perform better on individual work assignments," is **irrelevant** to the passage. No evidence for this claim is provided in the passage. Similarly, no information regarding whether students work in small groups to prepare reports on historic people has been presented in the passage. Thus, answer D, "Students usually prepare reports on historic people by working in small groups," is also **irrelevant**.

PRACTICE TEST FOR INFERENCE

On the following pages you will find a practice test with which you can test your skill at inference from information presented in a reading passage. Answer each test item. When you have completed all five items, refer to the answer key on page 35. If you missed any items, read why the answer you selected was incorrect.

Adapted from an education journal:

Career counselors recognize that individuals with better communication skills are more likely to achieve job success. Many educators agree and are placing an increased emphasis on the development of such skills. According to one educator, "Students must learn not only how to acquire knowledge, but also how to acquire an understanding of each other."

Common instructional strategies can be used to help students improve their interpersonal communication skills. For example, by role-playing real-life situations, students develop the essential communication skill of recognizing other points of view. Classroom debates and discussions enable students to practice presenting information or opinions in an effective manner. Writing activities teach students how to organize and present their thoughts on paper.

Many teachers report seeing the results of their classroom activities in the form of improvements in their students' communication skills. "My students seem to interact more effectively," said one teacher. "Whereas before they were quick to interrupt, they now listen more closely and choose their words more carefully."

1. Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

- **A** The recommendations of high-school career counselors almost always lead to curriculum changes.
- **B** Communication skills must be taught in the public schools because students are not taught these skills at home.
- **C** Most teachers have not seen the benefits of their efforts to teach students how to communicate.
- **D** Role-playing real-life situations can help students experience later job success.

Adapted from a newspaper:

Until the past decade, some schools used an ineffective approach to student discipline. Students were segregated into three identifiable groups. The favored few, or "pets," received most of the positive attention from teachers and administrators. They were actively involved in school activities. The "trouble-makers" were individuals who had the reputation of "testing the system." It was expected that these students would misbehave, thus creating the self-fulfilling prophecy that rules were likely to be broken. This group of students was more numerous than the "pets." Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of these schools was the presence of an even larger group, the "nobodies." These students rarely received any attention, and their involvement in school was minimal.

2. Which of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A Disciplinary practices in schools have not changed much during the past decade.

B The group of students called "nobodies" was larger and less actively involved in school activities than the "pets."

C Discipline is the most complex problem facing schools today.

D Schools can provide instruction more effectively if students work with teachers in determining the rules of a school.

Adapted from a newspaper/magazine

Several studies have demonstrated that attempts at educational reform are most successful if there is a large amount of community involvement. Officials with the Baltimore public school system decided to apply this concept when they launched a "school hotline." The hotline is the latest in a series of attempts to deal with one of the worst attendance rates in the country. Previous efforts that used punishments and rewards focused only on the students and did not involve the public. "People can call to tell us about students who are not in school," said the project coordinator. City police then go to pick up the students who are reported to be skipping school. If the situation involves a problem at a student's home, a school social worker is sent to make a home visit. Thus, this program is heavily dependent on community involvement.

The hotline is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. As evidence of community involvement in the program, there has been an average of nine calls a day since the hotline was started. District officials hope that the hotline will improve the current 84 percent attendance rate by the end of the school year.

3. Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A The school hotline should be more successful than previous efforts to increase school attendance.

B Most of the calls to the hotline have required a home visit by a social worker.

C Previous efforts to deal with low attendance rates were very effective.

D. The attendance rate in Baltimore public schools will be 84 percent by the end of the school year.

Adapted from an education textbook:

Vocabulary development in many schools may not be receiving the degree of emphasis that it deserves. A good vocabulary is valuable in making friends, meeting the challenges of college, getting a job, and achieving career success. Schools should, therefore, continually promote vocabulary development.

In the elementary grades, children expand their vocabularies primarily through direct experience. They learn new words by seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling. Teachers can provide firsthand experiences to extend vocabulary development.

Secondary students learn new words through structural analysis. The knowledge of root words, prefixes, and suffixes enables students, on their own, to figure out the meaning of new words. Use of the dictionary can be taught as an additional tool for independently learning new words.

4. Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A Children in elementary grades learn the majority of their vocabulary words from basal reading books.

B A good vocabulary is the single most important skill that students can learn.

C Elementary and secondary students typically learn vocabulary by different approaches.

D Secondary school teachers should promote vocabulary development by providing a variety of firsthand experiences.

Adapted from an education textbook:

Teachers often work together to develop behavioral objectives designed to help students achieve curricular goals. Some educators believe it important to standardize these objectives so that all students in a class share the same instructional targets. However, if the same behavioral objectives are applied to all students, the instructional program can lose its flexibility. This presents an instructional danger because of the wide range of individual students' skill levels and learning styles.

An inflexible program prevents teachers from enhancing the curriculum with their own teaching concepts. Thus, students do not benefit from the different approaches teachers might use to achieve the same broad goals. Teachers working in groups to construct behavioral objectives should keep in mind differences in students' skill levels and learning styles. By doing so, they can avoid harmful restrictions on instruction while achieving curricular goals.

5. Which one of the following conclusions can most reasonably be drawn **from this selection**?

A Applying the same behavioral objectives to all students may reduce the benefits of teachers' individual instructional approaches.

B Teachers should never work in groups to write behavioral objectives.

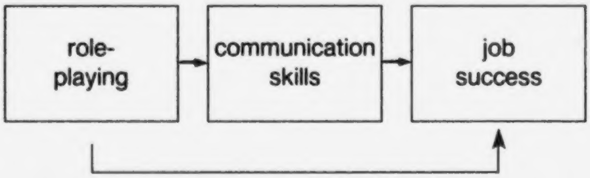
C Many teachers apply their own teaching concepts when constructing standardized behavioral objectives.

D Curricula based on standardized behavioral objectives are never inflexible.

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The answers to the practice test are No. 1: D, No. 2: B, No. 3: A, No. 4: C, and No. 5: A.

Item 1 discusses the development of interpersonal communication skills in students. The introductory sentence states that "individuals with better communication skills are more likely to achieve job success." The second paragraph presents several instructional strategies for promoting such skills. On of these strategies is "role-playing real-life situations." Thus, the following conclusion can be drawn from the passage:



Answer D, "Role-playing real-life situations can help students experience later job success," expresses this conclusion. Therefore, answer D is the correct answer choice. Answer A, "The recommendations of high-school career counselors almost always lead to curriculum changes," is **unsupported**. Although the first two sentences in the passage do say that career counselors and "many" educators agree on a particular point and that these educators have changed their instruction accordingly, the passage says nothing about the impact of high-school career counselors. Answer B, "Communication skills must be taught in the public schools because students are not taught these skills at home," is also **irrelevant** because the passage, does not mention either "home" or "public schools." Answer C, "Most teachers have not seen the benefits of their efforts to teach students how to communicate," is **inaccurate**. It is contradicted in the last paragraph of the reading selection, which says that many teachers have seen improvements in students as a result of the teachers' efforts.

Item 2 explains how students were once divided into three groups for purposes of discipline. The only answer choice that can be logically concluded from the material provided in the passage is answer B. It states, "The group of students called 'nobodies' was larger and less actively involved in school activities than the 'pets.'" To see if this is true we need to confirm two statements: (1) that there were more "nobodies" than there were "pets"; and (2) that the "nobodies" were less involved in school activities than were the "pets." The first claim is true because the passage says that there were more "trouble-makers" than "pets," and even more "nobodies" than trouble-makers. This comparison can be illustrated as follows:

A ("pets") ← more — B ("trouble-makers") ← more — C ("nobodies")

so

A ("pets") ← more — C ("nobodies")

The second claim is also true. The passage states that "pets" were "actively involved in school activities"; later, at the end of the passage, it describes the "nobodies'" involvement in school as "minimal." This clearly implies that "nobodies" were less involved in school activities than were "pets." Because both claims can be inferred from the passage, answer B is the correct answer choice. Answer A, "Disciplinary practices in schools have not changed much during the past decade," is **inaccurate**. It is contradicted in the first sentence of the passage, in which the phrase "until the past decade" suggests that what follows ("some schools used an ineffective approach to student discipline") has changed. Answer C, "Discipline is the most complex problem facing schools today," is **irrelevant** because the selection presents no evidence for this claim. Answer D, "Schools can provide instruction more effectively if students work with teachers in determining the rules of a school," is also **irrelevant**. The reading passage says nothing about the determining of rules in a school.

Item 3 discusses an attempt by a school district to involve members of the community in its efforts to improve its attendance rate. The correct answer is A, "The school hotline should be more successful than previous efforts to increase school attendance." We can use the first sentence in the passage to construct the following statement:

If A, then B.

If (A) there is large amount of community involvement, then (B) educational reform will probably be successful.

The passage goes on to say that previous efforts to increase school attendance did not involve the community. It describes "a series of attempts to deal with one of the worst attendance rates in the country," suggesting that these previous attempts have not been successful. This information can also be presented logically.

If not A, then not B.

If there is no community involvement, then reform will not be successful.

Because the school hotline does involve the community, we expect that it is more likely to succeed than previous efforts that did not involve the community. Answer B, "Most of the calls to the hotline have required a home visit by a social worker," is **unsupported**. The passage (first paragraph, second-to-last sentence) states that a home visit is made by a social worker "if the situation involves a problem at a student's home." It does not say how many situations have required this home visit. Answer C, "Previous efforts to deal with low attendance rates were very effective," is **inaccurate** because the passage suggests that the efforts were unsuccessful. Answer D, "The attendance rate in Baltimore public schools will be 84 percent by the end of the school year," is also **inaccurate**. It is contradicted in the last sentence of the passage, which identifies 84 percent as the current rate but does not suggest what the future rate might be.

Item 4 is about vocabulary development in schools. The passage describes the different methods used to expand students' vocabularies at the elementary and secondary levels. Answer C, "Elementary and secondary students typically learn vocabulary by different approaches," is the correct answer choice. It states a generalization based on the relationship between the second and third paragraphs in the selection.

Details	**Generalization**
Elementary direct experience Secondary structural analysis	different approaches

Answer A, "Children in elementary grades learn the majority of their vocabulary words from basal reading books," is **inaccurate** because it is contradicted in the first sentence of the second paragraph, which states that in the elementary grade students learn much through direct experience. Answer B, "A good vocabulary is the single most important skill that students can learn, is **unsupported.** If you chose this answer, you inferred beyond the scope of the reading selection. The selection does express the importance of vocabulary development; it does not, however, suggest that vocabulary development is the **most** important skill. Answer D, "Secondary school teachers should promote vocabulary development by providing a variety of firsthand experiences," is **inaccurate**. The passage contradicts this claim; it states that elementary, not secondary, level teachers can provide firsthand experiences to extend vocabulary development.

Item 5 suggests a disadvantage associated with creating standardized behavioral objectives. It lists several aspects of this disadvantage, all of which can be generalized in answer A, "Applying the same behavioral objectives to all students may reduce the benefits of teachers' individual instructional approaches." Therefore, answer A is the correct answer choice. Answer B, "Teachers should never work in groups to write behavioral objectives," is **unsupported**. The third sentence in the second paragraph says, "Teachers working in groups to construct behavioral objectives should keep in mind differences in students' skill levels and learning styles." The fact that this is stated in the selection shows that, although the passage warns against group-established objectives being inflexible, it does not claim that teachers should never write objectives in groups. Answer C, "Many teachers apply their own teaching concepts when constructing standardized behavioral objectives," is also **unsupported**. The passage does not discuss teachers' use of their own teaching methods when establishing objectives; it says that, when constructing objectives, they should use enough flexibility to allow teachers to apply their own teaching concepts in the classroom. Answer D, "Curricula based on standardized behavioral objectives are never inflexible," is **inaccurate**. It is contradicted in the second and third paragraphs of the selection.

Summary

Inference is a difficult skill to master. It involves complex critical thinking processes. If you understand the types of inference described in this guide, however, you can learn to apply these logical constructs to ideas presented in written material.

When approaching an inference item, read the passage slowly and carefully. Reread it until you feel you have grasped the concepts expressed in the selection. Then approach the answer choices one at a time, first eliminating those which you think are clearly wrong according to the wrong-answer types described in this section. When you feel you have found the correct inference, read the passage again to make sure that support for the statement is definitely present in the reading selection.

WRITING

This section of the Skills Review Manual was developed to aid Texas educators who wish to improve their writing skills. The Writing Section of the TECAT is composed of two parts. The first part consists of 30 multiple-choice test items in which the following three skills are measured by 10 items per skill: **mechanics**, **sentence formation**, and **English usage**. The second part of the TECAT Writing Section requires the examinee to choose one of two writing assignments, then prepare a **written composition** of approximately 150 words for the assignment selected.

This section of the self-study guide provides instruction and practice exercises dealing with each of these four skills, that is, the three skills measured by multiple-choice items and the composition skill. For the three skills assessed by multiple-choice items, you will be given: (1) a description of **how the skill is measured** on the TECAT; (2) a **skill analysis**, that is, a description of the skill's key ingredients, which must be mastered by those striving to acquire the skill; (3) **sample test items** accompanied by detailed explanations of the correct and incorrect answer choices; (4) a five-item **practice test**; (5) an **answer key** for the practice test including answer analyses for all practice-test items; and (6) a **summary**. Most of these six elements are also provided for the composition skill.

All of the multiple-choice items used in the Skills Review Manual were created at the same time as the items actually used in the TECAT. Because the items were tried out with Texas educators, information regarding which wrong-answer options were selected is available. Where useful, this information will be described.

Skill-Building Strategies

Two relatively distinct assessment approaches, that is, multiple-choice and composition, are used in the TECAT to assess examinees' writing competence. However, the composition part of the test is more strongly emphasized in the appraisal of an examinee's performance on the TECAT writing section. As is described in the composition section, TECAT compositions are assigned a score of either 1, 2, or 3. If an examinee achieves a 1 on the composition part of the TECAT writing section, that examinee passes the entire writing section. If the examinee achieves a 3 on the composition part of the TECAT writing section, the examinee fails the entire writing section. Performance on the multiple-choice writing items is only used in determining an examinee's pass/fail status if the examinee achieves a 2 on the composition part of the TECAT. Thus, in preparing for the writing section of the TECAT, it is important to **concentrate on producing an acceptable composition**.

Fortunately, the material regarding the multiple-choice part of the TECAT writing section is highly relevant to the preparation of an acceptable composition. Rules regarding mechanics, sentence formation, and English usage are clearly important in developing a professionally acceptable composition. The more you know about capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, for example, the fewer errors you are apt to make when you write your composition. Thus, when working through the self-study guide's sections dealing with the multiple-choice writing items, try to master the content well enough to **apply** such knowledge to your composition.

Using this Section of the Skills Review Manual

- Read this section of the guide **in its entirety**, being sure to take every practice test.
- If you answered incorrectly **any** items on a multiple-choice practice test, **read all explanations** of correct and incorrect answer choices.
- For any multiple-choice practice test on which you answered two or more items incorrectly, **reread the entire section** with greater care.
- It may be useful to **ask a colleague for assistance** in reviewing the quality of your composition.

Before you go through the following self-study materials, think carefully about how you will use your preparation time. Try to spend the bulk of your study time on those TECAT skills that will contribute most heavily to your score on the test. For example, each of the three subskills dealing with spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are covered by no more than three or four multiple-choice test items on the TECAT; in other words, 10 items **in all** will test the mechanics objective, which consists of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. In contrast, there will be 10 multiple-choice items dealing with sentence formation. Another 10 multiple-choice items will focus on English usage. Accordingly, you may wish to focus more of your preparation time on the content you need to review **and** on the content covered by larger numbers of TECAT test items. Do not, however, neglect any skill area; an increased score in any objective will raise your overall score on the TECAT. Furthermore, mastery of all skills will contribute to the quality of your written composition.

Finally, it must be recognized that one's ability to write covers a substantial body of knowledge—a body of knowledge that is developed over a lifetime. Thus, if you have difficulty mastering the skills assessed by the TECAT, continue your effort to understand and to use the numerous "rules" of writing more effectively. Most educators will have access to a variety of textbooks used in secondary level or college English classes. A systematic review of the content of such textbooks can help you prepare for the TECAT Writing Section.

MECHANICS

As measured on the TECAT, the skill area of mechanics includes three separate subskills, namely, **capitalization**, **punctuation**, and **spelling**. Educators who make many mechanical errors in their writing will find that their communications are often seen as professionally unacceptable, regardless of content. A series of spelling, punctuation, and/or capitalization errors typically weakens the quality of a written communication.

How the Skill is Measured

There will be 10 mechanics items on each form of the TECAT. Because the skill consists of three subskills (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling), there will be three or four items (of the 10) measuring each subskill. For example, a given form of the TECAT might contain three spelling items, three capitalization items, and four punctuation items.

Test items for this skill will present examinees with a written communication that an educator might write to students, parents, colleagues, or community members. All parts of the communication will be identified by bracketed numbers such as [1] or [2]. The communication will contain either no errors or one error. The answer choices for an item will be based on the bracketed sections of the communication. You will be asked to identify which of three designated sections of the communication contains an error or to indicate that no error is present. For example, you will be asked to indicate if any of three sections from the communication contains an error in a designated category of mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, or spelling). If none of the three sections specified in the answer choices contains an error, you should choose choice D, "None of the above."

Because there are differences in the three types of mechanics items, each subskill will be illustrated with one sample item. The five-item practice test—consisting of two capitalization items, two punctuation items, and one spelling item—will be provided after all three subskills have been considered. We now turn to the first of the three mechanics subskills, capitalization.

Capitalization

Skill Analysis

The use of capitalization in writing generally focuses on whether the first letter of a word should be capitalized. The conventions of capitalization are intended to guide the readers of a written communication so that they are less likely to become confused. The distinction between common nouns such as "city," "mountain," and "man" and proper nouns such as "Dallas," "Mount Whitney," and "Joe" is made clear by the use of capital letters to begin words naming special, individual entities. A capital letter also tells the reader that a new sentence has begun. Without these important signals, the meaning of a reading passage would be unclear and difficult to understand.

Most of us are familiar with the more common conventions of capitalization, such as capitalizing the pronoun "I" or the first word in a sentence. Some rules for initial capitalization, however, are less well known. If you wish to master this mechanics subskill, there is really no substitute for learning the capitalization conventions that are eligible for testing on the TECAT. Those rules are provided below. They are divided into two sections. First, there are 18 rules describing instances in which initial capitalization **is required**. Then there are seven rules describing instances in which initial capitalization **should never be used**. Both of these sets of rules are eligible for use in TECAT items dealing with capitalization. If you know the 25 TECAT capitalization rules well enough to apply them, you should be able to successfully answer TECAT items on capitalization. If you have any difficulty understanding any of the rules, either seek the assistance of a friend or consult an English textbook that deals with capitalization rules.

Remember, because the capitalization conventions eligible for testing on the TECAT represent the most widely used capitalization rules, they are clearly worth mastering. If you are unfamiliar with any of the rules, study them carefully. Then apply these rules to the sample items and practice test appearing later in this section of the self-study guide.

Presented below are the 25 capitalization rules eligible for testing on the TECAT:

Capitalization Rules Eligible for Testing

- **Initial capitals are required for:**
  1. The first word of a sentence (for example, "Students should do their homework.")
  2. names of days of the week (for example, "Monday," "Saturday")
  3. names of months of the year (for example, "March," "September")
  4. the pronoun I (for example, "Mr. Brooks and I were selected for the committee.")
  5. names, including initials, of individuals (for example, "John R. Doe")
  6. titles which precede individuals' names (for example, "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Doctor," "Senator")
  7. all the words in the names of holidays, except prepositions and articles (for example, "New Year's Day")
  8. the first word and all nouns in the salutation of a letter (for example, "Dear Sir or Madam")
  9. the first word in the complimentary close of a letter (for example, "Sincerely yours,")
  10. family relationship names when they precede a name (for example, "Uncle Bill") or are used in place of a person's name, especially in direct address (for example, "Did the teacher call me, Father?")
  11. all the words in the names of specific geographical locations except prepositions, conjunctions, and articles (for example, "the Avenue of the Americas," "Rocky Mountains," "Florida")
  12. all the words in names of specific organizations and agencies, except prepositions, conjunctions, and articles (for example, "Boy Scouts of America," "National Aeronautics and Space Administration")
  13. names of languages (for example, "Spanish," "German")
  14. names of nationalities (for example, "Polish," "Swedish")
  15. names of religions, religious denominations (for example, "Episcopalian," "Baptist") and deities (for example, "Jehovah")
  16. adjectives formed from geographical names, languages, races, nationalities, and religions (for example, "Her lecture is about famous Italian painters.")

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17. the first word and all the other words in titles of books, articles, works of art, etc., except short prepositions, conjunctions, and articles (for example, *The Wind in the Willows*.)
18. course titles followed by a number (for example, "Art II," "Geography I")

- **Initial capitals are never used for**:

19. common nouns (example of error, "The principal's Car was hit.")
20. adjectives not based on proper nouns (example of error, "My Best student moved out of the district.")
21. words other than the first word in the complimentary close of a letter (example of error, "Sincerely Yours,")
22. prepositions, conjunctions, or articles in the names of holidays, specific geographical locations, specific organizations, and title of books, articles, etc. (example of error, "the Fourth Of July")
23. family relationships when used alone or preceded by a possessive pronoun (example of error, "His Brother was also in my class.")
24. compass directions that designate direction rather than a section of the country (example of error, "Our school is North of the lake.")
25. names of school subjects except for (1) proper nouns and adjectives, or (2) course titles followed by a number (example of error, "The grades in History classes were low this year.")

Sample Item

Read this selection, paying careful attention to capitalization.

> Adapted from an article on classroom activities:
>
> [1] Ms. Willoughby's third-grade students are working on an interesting project. [2] If you walk into her classroom, you will immediately notice the results of their activities. [3] Because the students want you to visit their classroom, they have asked me not to reveal details about the project. [4] Feel free to visit Ms. Willoughby's Classroom during recess or lunch, today or tomorrow.

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization**?

A Part [1]

B Part [2]

C Part [4]

D None of the above

This communication contains several uses of capital letters. Read the selection carefully. Attempt to identify a sentence containing a capitalization error. Remember, an error in capitalization means that either (1) a word that should be capitalized is not capitalized or (2) a word that should not be capitalized is capitalized.

The sentence labeled [4] contains a capitalization error: "Classroom" should not be capitalized (see capitalization rule No. 18). Therefore, answer choice C, "Part [4]," is the correct answer.

Answers A, "Part [1]," and B, "Part [2]," are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences do not contain capitalization errors. They are written correctly. (Remember, the correct answer choice must either refer to the sentence that contains a capitalization error or indicate that no capitalization error exists in the communication.) In Part [1] (answer A), "Ms. Willoughby" is correctly capitalized because these words form an individual's title and name (capitalization rules No. 5 and No. 6). No other words in the sentence require capitalization. In Part [3] (answer B), only the first word in the sentence is capitalized (capitalization rule No. 1). No other capitalization is necessary in this sentence.

Answer choice D, "None of the above," is incorrect because it indicates that no error exists. As we have seen, the communication does, in fact, contain a capitalization error.

Punctuation

Skill Analysis

Punctuation is used to help readers understand the meaning of a sentence. A writer employs punctuation marks such as commas and semicolons to assist readers in clearly understanding the writer's message. There are many instances in which readers would be confused regarding a sentence's meaning if it were not for the use of a comma or apostrophe. There are also a number of uses of punctuation marks which, just as in the case of capitalization, represent what has become, through the years, a convention. For instance, the salutation of a friendly letter is followed by a comma ("Dear George,"), but the salutation of a business letter is followed by a colon ("Dear Madam:").

Multiple-choice items on the TECAT require you to identify:

1. instances in which necessary punctuation has been omitted (for example, the missing period at the end of the abbreviation in "That was Mrs Jones.");
2. instances in which the wrong punctuation has been used (for example, the period that has been mistakenly placed at the end of a question in "How tall is he."); and
3. instances in which extraneous punctuation has been used (for example, the unnecessary apostrophe that has been incorrectly included in the possessive pronoun in "The monkey dropped it's food.").

TECAT test items assessing the examinee's punctuation skill are based on a set of commonly used punctuation rules that are presented below, along with examples. The choices you will be asked to make on the TECAT involve common, nondebatable uses or misuses of punctuation. For example, because the use of the terminal comma in a series ("pies, cakes, and cookies") is a matter of personal preference, no TECAT items test the use of such a comma. Similarly, because the use of a comma to set off an introductory clause in sentences is sometimes a matter of one's stylistic preference, no TECAT items will deal with whether such a comma should be used.

There are six types of punctuation marks that are eligible for testing in the multiple-choice part of the TECAT Writing Section. These six types of punctuation are (1) periods, (2) question marks, (3) commas, (4) semicolons, (5) apostrophes, and (6) colons. When you review the punctuation rules provided below, note that for all punctuation marks except commas there are only one or two uses tested on the TECAT. In contrast, there are 10 tested instances in which commas are required. Carefully read each comma rule and the accompanying example; then be certain that you understand how to apply the rule. If you do not, either seek assistance from a friend or consult a standard grammar text like those used in a secondary-school English course.

Practice can enhance your understanding of the 18 punctuation rules presented below. You may find it useful to identify any rules with which you have some difficulty. Then, before you work through the sample item or take the mechanics practice test, look through books or magazines to find examples of how each of the rules is used.

Remember, punctuation marks are small. Therefore, look carefully at any test items focusing on punctuation. It's easy to overlook an instance in which a punctuation mark is needed because as people read a sentence they may "mentally insert" a needed punctuation mark. Careful reading of the boxed communication of a TECAT punctuation item and, particularly, of the three numbered sections of the communication identified in the item's answer choices, is of vital importance. Recall that some TECAT mechanics items will not contain any errors. If this is the case, mark choice D, "None of the above." If, after having read and reread the sections of the communication that are used as answer choices, you find no violations of the 18 punctuation rules presented below, mark choice D.

The punctuation rules eligible for testing in the TECAT multiple-choice mechanics items are as follows:

Punctuation Rules Eligible for Testing

- **Periods** are required:
  1. at the end of all declarative sentences, including indirect questions (for example, "Jim asked if he could leave.")
  2. after abbreviations (for example, "oz.," "Mrs.," "Jan.")
- **Question Marks** are required at the end of direct questions (for example, "How old is she?")
- **Commas** are required:
  1. in a series of three or more words or phrases (for example, "Success requires hard work, talent, and good timing."*)
  2. between two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (for example, "Students have never liked homework, and they never will.")
  3. to separate coordinate adjectives that modify the same noun (for example, "a beautiful, stormy lake")

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* TECAT items will not be based on the use of a comma before "and" or "or" in a series.

4. to set off nonessential clauses and nonessential participial phrases (for example, "My only brother, who is a painter, lives in Austin." and "Emma James, picking up a pen, began to write.")
5. to set off expressions, such as appositives, that interrupt the sentence (for example, "Samuel Clemens, a great American writer, once worked as a steamboat pilot.")
6. after the salutation in a friendly letter (for example, "Dear Helen,")
7. after the complimentary close in a letter (for example, "Sincerely yours,")
8. between the independent parts of a date (except when you are given only the month, in which case no punctuation is needed) (for example, "The seatbelt law took effect on February 8, 1983.")
9. between the independent parts of an address or geographical location (for example, "The correct address is 2816 Manteo Road, Essex, Ohio.")
10. before a direct quotation (for example, "He said, 'Let me try.'")

- **Semicolons** are required between independent clauses not joined by coordinating conjunctions (for example, "A cold lasts about a week; pneumonia lasts much longer.")

- **Apostrophes** are required:
  1. to form possessive nouns (for example, "Anne's car," "Monday's assembly," "virtue's rewards," "the Forbes' house")*
  2. to form contractions (for example, "don't," "hadn't")

- **Colons** are required:
  1. to separate hours and minutes in time (for example, "4:25 p.m.")
  2. after the salutation in a business letter (for example, "Dear Sir:")

Sample Item

Read this selection, paying careful attention to punctuation.

Adapted from a letter to a local businessperson:

[1] Dear Dr. Benton:

[2] Thank you for taking the time to visit my Biology III class yesterday. [3] Your presentation on animal medicine was enlightening. [4] The student's were fascinated by the many kinds of medical problems in your animal hospital. [5] Several students have indicated an interest in entering your profession since your visit. [6] My best student, who won first place at last month's science fair, is among them.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Jason Wagner
[9] Teacher
[10] Desert High School

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **punctuation**?

A Part [2]
B Part [4]
C Part [6]
D None of the above

This communication contains several uses of punctuation marks. Read the selection carefully. Try to identify a sentence containing a punctuation error. Remember, an error in punctuation means that either (1) a necessary punctuation mark is missing or (2) an unnecessary punctuation is incorrectly included.

The sentence labeled [4] contains a punctuation error: the plural form "students" is written incorrectly with an apostrophe. "The students" is a plural noun serving as the subject of the sentence; it is not a possessive form and, therefore, cannot contain an apostrophe. Because this sentence contains a punctuation error, answer B, "Part [4]," is the correct answer choice.

Answer A, "Part [2]," and answer C, "Part [6]," are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences do not contain punctuation errors. (Remember, the correct answer choice must either refer to the sentence that contains a punctuation error or indicate that no punctuation error exists in the communication.) In Part [2] (answer A), the only punctuation necessary is the period at the end of the sentence. The sentence contains this final period and is, therefore, correctly punctuated. Part [6] (answer C) contains an interrupting nonessential clause that is properly set off by commas (comma rule No. 4). Within this clause there is a possessive form ("last month's") that demonstrates proper use of an apostrophe. Thus, Part [6] also contains no punctuation errors.

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* TECAT punctuation items will only test whether an apostrophe is needed, not where in the word an apostrophe should be placed. Therefore, the difference between a singular possessive noun such as "teacher's" and its plural form ("teachers'") will not be tested.

Answer D, "None of the above," is also an incorrect answer choice. It indicates that no punctuation error exists in the communication when, in fact, there is such an error in the selection. If you would have selected this answer choice, you should probably review conventions of plural formation and apostrophe usage in forming possessive nouns.

Spelling

Skill Analysis

The ability to spell plays an important role in how an individual's writing is received. For the multiple-choice TECAT items dealing with spelling, as with the other TECAT mechanics items, the examinee's task is to identify whether a spelling error is present in one of three designated sections of a written communication. If there is no spelling error in the three sections indicated in the test item's A, B, and C answer choices, then the examinee is to mark choice D, "None of the above."

Most textbooks used in secondary-school or college English classes contain sections dealing with guidelines to improve one's spelling. These are a number of spelling "rules" which, if followed, should enhance one's ability to spell.

All words that are eligible to be misspelled appear on the Texas Education Agency *Cumulative Vocabulary List*. It contains over 10,000 words commonly used in written communication, including such simple-to-spell words as "the" and some words that are less simple to spell, such as "adolescence." Thus, to provide you with a set of the types of words more apt to be misspelled, a list of all Exit Level words from the **Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills Spelling List** (Texas Education Agency, May 1985) has been provided below and on the following pages. If you can spell the words included on such a spelling list, you will be more likely to detect misspellings in the TECAT mechanics items.

Review the spelling list carefully. Study any words that you have difficulty spelling. Although you will have access to a dictionary during the composition section of the TECAT, there will be no dictionaries available when you complete the multiple-choice writing items. Accordingly, you will need to know how to spell words such as those on this list so that you can recognize them when they are misspelled.

Spelling List

ABANDON
ABBREVIATION
ABDICATE
ABILITY
ABNORMAL
ABOARD
ABOLISH
ABRIDGE
ABROAD
ABSENCE
ABSOLUTE
ABSTAIN
ABSTINENCE
ABSTRACT
ABSURD
ABUNDANCE
ABUNDANT
ABUNDANTLY
ABUSE
ABUSED
ACADEMIC
ACADEMY
ACCELERATE
ACCEPTABLE
ACCEPTANCE
ACCESS
ACCESSIBLE
ACCIDENTALLY
ACCOMMODATE
ACCOMPANIED
ACCOMPANIMENT
ACCOMPLISHMENT
ACCORDANCE
ACCORDING
ACCUMULATE
ACCURACY
ACCURATE
ACCUSED
ACCUSTOM
ACCUSTOMED
ACHIEVEMENT
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
ACQUAINTANCE
ACQUAINTED
ACQUIRE
ACQUIRED
ACQUIT
ACQUITTAL
ACQUITTED
ACROBAT
ACTION
ACTIVELY
ACTUALLY
ACUTE
ADDITIONAL
ADEQUATE
ADJOURN
ADJOURNED
ADMINISTRATION
ADMINISTRATIVE
ADOLESCENCE
ADOPTED
ADULT
ADVANCED
ADVANTAGEOUS
ADVERB
ADVERTISE
ADVERTISEMENT
ADVISABLE
ADVISING
AERIAL
AERONAUTICS
AFFECTION
AFFECTIONATE
AGENCIES
AGENCY
AGENDA
AGGRAVATE
AGGRESSIVE
AGREEABLE
AGREEMENT
AGRICULTURAL
AGRICULTURE
AIRCRAFT
AIRLIFT
ALBUM
ALCOHOL
ALERT
ALFALFA
ALGEBRA
ALLEGIANCE
ALLIANCE
ALLIGATOR
ALLOWANCE
ALLOY
ALPHABET
ALPHABETICAL
ALTITUDE
ALUMINUM
ALUMNUS
AMATEUR
AMAZEMENT
AMBITION
AMBULANCE
AMENDMENT
AMIABLE
AMMUNITION
AMPERE
AMPLIFIED
ANALYSIS
ANALYZE
ANALYZING
ANCESTOR
ANCESTRY
ANCHORAGE
ANCIENT
ANESTHESIA
ANGLE
ANGULAR
ANNEX
ANNIVERSARY
ANNOUNCEMENT
ANNOUNCER
ANNOYANCE
ANNUALLY
ANONYMOUS
ANTECEDENT
ANTENNA
ANTIBIOTIC
ANTICIPATE
ANTIQUE
ANTISEPTIC
ANXIETY
APARTMENT
APIECE
APOLOGIZE
APOLOGY
APPARATUS
APPARENT
APPARENTLY
APPEARANCE
APPETITE
APPLAUSE
APPLICANT
APPLICATION
APPLY
APPOINTMENT
APPRECIATED
APPRECIATION
APPROACHING
APPROPRIATE
APPROPRIATION
APPROVAL
APPROXIMATE
APPROXIMATELY
ARC
ARCHITECT
ARCHITECTURE
AREA
ARENA
ARGUED
ARGUMENT
AROUSE
ARRANGEMENT
ARRANGING
ARREST
ARRIVAL
ARTICLE
ARTIFICIAL
ASCEND
ASIDE
ASPECT
ASPHALT
ASSERT
ASSISTANCE
ASSISTANT
ASSOCIATION
ASSORTMENT
ASSUME
ASSUMPTION
ASSURANCE
ASSURE
ASTERISK
ASTRONAUT
ATHLETE
ATHLETICS
ATLAS
ATMOSPHERE
ATOMIC
ATTACH
ATTAIN
ATTEMPT
ATTEND
ATTENDANCE
ATTENDANT
ATTITUDE
ATTORNEY
ATTRACTIVE
AUDIENCE
AUDITOR
AUTHENTIC
AUTHOR
AUTHORITY
AUTOGRAPH
AUTOMATIC
AUTOMATION
AVAILABLE
AVOIDED
AWAKENED
AWARE
AWESOME
BACTERIA

BALLET
BALLOON
BALLOT
BANJO
BANKRUPTCY
BARBAROUS
BARBECUE
BARGAIN
BASED
BASIC
BASIS
BATHHOUSE
BEACHHEAD
BEARD
BEARING
BECOMING
BEGGAR
BEHAVED
BEHAVIOR
BEIGE
BELIEF
BENEFICIAL
BENEFIT
BERTH
BESIEGED
BETRAY
BIENNIAL
BILLION
BIMONTHLY
BIND
BINOCULARS
BIOGRAPHY
BIOLOGY
BISCUIT
BIWEEKLY
BLEACHERS
BLOCKADE
BODIES
BOISTEROUS
BONUS
BOOKKEEPER
BOOKKEEPING
BORROWED
BOUILLON
BOUQUET
BOXED
BRAID
BRAVO
BREADTH
BREATH
BREATHE
BREWING
BRIDGE
BRIEFLY
BRIGHTEST
BRILLIANT
BRISTLE
BROKERAGE
BROOK
BRUISE
BUCKLE
BUDGET
BUFFET
BUGGY
BULLDOZER
BULLETIN
BUNDLE
BUNK
BURDEN
BUREAU
BURGLAR
BURGLARY
BUTCHER
BUTTE
CAFETERIA
CALCIUM
CALCULATION
CALENDAR
CALORIES
CAMEL
CAMOUFLAGE
CAMPAIGN
CAMPUS
CANCEL
CANCELLATION
CANDIDATE
CANNERY
CANOEING
CANVAS
CANVASS
CANYON
CAPABLE
CAPACITY
CAPITOL
CARBON
CARDINAL
CAREER
CARPENTER
CARPENTRY
CARRIAGE
CARVED
CASHIER
CASTING
CATTAIL
CAUTIOUS
CAVITY
CEASE
CEILING
CELEBRATION
CELLOPHANE
CEMETERY
CENSUS
CENTRALIZE
CENTURY
CERAMICS
CEREAL
CEREMONY
CERTIFICATE
CHALLENGE
CHANGEABLE
CHAOTIC
CHARACTER
CHARACTERISTIC
CHARITY
CHARTER
CHASING
CHAUFFEUR
CHEEK
CHEMICAL
CHEMISTRY
CHERISHED
CHIEFLY
CHOCOLATE
CHRISTENED
CHRONOLOGICAL
CINNAMON
CIRCUIT
CIRCULAR
CIRCULATE
CIRCULATION
CIRCUMFERENCE
CIRCUMSTANCE
CITIZEN
CITIZENSHIP
CIVIL
CIVILIZATION
CIVILIZE
CLASSIC
CLASSIFICATION
CLASSIFIES
CLEARANCE
CLIMATE
CLOSELY
CLOUDLESS
CLUTCH
COFFEE
COINCIDENCE
COLLAPSE
COLLECTION
COLLECTIVE
COLLIDE
COLLISION
COLONEL
COLONIAL
COLONIST
COLOSSAL
COLUMN
COMA
COMBINATION
COMBUSTION
COMEDY
COMFORTABLE
COMFORTED
COMMEMORATE
COMMEND
COMMENT
COMMERCE
COMMERCIAL
COMMISSION
COMMIT
COMMITTEE
COMMODITY
COMMUNICATING
COMMUNICATION
COMMUNISM
COMMUTER
COMPANION
COMPARABLE
COMPARATIVELY
COMPARED
COMPARING
COMPARISON
COMPASS
COMPEL
COMPETENT
COMPETITION
COMPLEX
COMPLEXION
COMPLIMENT
COMPLY
COMPOSE
COMPOSED
COMPOSITION
COMPREHENSION
COMPROMISE
COMPUTER
CONCEAL
CONCEALING
CONCEIVE
CONCENTRATION
CONCEPT
CONCERNING

CONCLUSION
CONCRETE
CONDEMN
CONDENSATION
CONDENSE
CONFEDERACY
CONFER
CONFERENCE
CONFERRED
CONFERRING
CONFESSION
CONFIDENCE
CONFIDENT
CONFIRM
CONFLICT
CONFORM
CONFUSION
CONGRATULATE
CONGRATULATIONS
CONJUNCTION
CONNECTION
CONSCIENCE
CONSCIOUS
CONSCIOUSLY
CONSEQUENCE
CONSEQUENTLY
CONSERVATION
CONSIDERABLE
CONSIDERATION
CONSIST
CONSISTENT
CONSOLATION
CONSONANT
CONSTANT
CONSTANTLY
CONSTELLATION
CONSTITUTION
CONSTRUCTION
CONSULTANT
CONTEMPLATE
CONTEXT
CONTINUAL
CONTINUALLY
CONTINUED
CONTRADICT
CONTRARY
CONTRAST
CONTRIBUTE
CONTRIBUTED
CONTROLLABLE
CONTROVERSY
CONVENIENCE
CONVERSATION
CONVERSE
CONVERT
CONVERTED
CONVEY
CONVICT
CONVINCE
COOKIE
COOPERATE
COOPERATED
COOPERATION
COPYRIGHT
CORDIALLY
CORPORATION
CORRECTION
CORRESPOND
CORRESPONDENCE
CORRUPT
COSMIC
COTTAGE
COUNCIL
COUNSEL
COUNSELOR
COUNTENANCE
COUPON
COURAGEOUS
COURTEOUS
COURTESY
COWCATCHER
COYOTE
CRANBERRIES
CREATE
CREATIVE
CREATURE
CREDIT
CREPT
CRIMINAL
CRISES
CRISIS
CRITICISM
CRITICIZE
CROQUET
CRUSADE
CRYSTAL
CUBE
CUBIC
CULTURE
CUMULUS
CURIOSITY
CURIOUS
CURRENT
CURRICULUM
CURVE
CUSTOMARY
CUSTOMER
CYLINDER
DAFFODIL
DANDELION
DARKNESS
DARLING
DATA
DEBATE
DEBT
DECAY
DECEIT
DECEIVE
DECEIVED
DECELERATE
DECENT
DECISION
DECLARATION
DECORATION
DECREASE
DEDICATE
DEFECTIVE
DEFER
DEFERRED
DEFERRING
DEFINITE
DEFINITION
DEGREE
DELEGATE
DELICATE
DELICIOUS
DELIGHTFUL
DELINQUENT
DELIRIOUS
DEMAND
DEMOCRACY
DEMOCRATIC
DEMONSTRATE
DEMONSTRATING
DEMONSTRATION
DENSE
DENSITY
DEPEND
DEPENDABLE
DEPOSIT
DEPRESSION
DEPTH
DEPUTY
DERRICK
DESCEND
DESCENDANT
DESCENT
DESCRIBED
DESCRIPTION
DESERVE
DESIRABLE
DESIRING
DESPAIR
DESPERATE
DESPICABLE
DESPISE
DESSERT
DESTINATION
DESTINED
DESTITUTE
DESTRUCTION
DETECT
DETECTIVE
DETERGENT
DETERMINE
DETRACT
DEVELOPMENT
DEVICE
DEVOTE
DIAGRAM
DIAMETER
DIARY
DICTATOR
DIESEL
DIET
DIFFERENCE
DIFFIDENCE
DIGESTION
DIGESTIVE
DIGIT
DIGNITY
DIMENSION
DINETTE
DIPLOMA
DIPLOMACY
DIRECT
DISAPPEARED
DISAPPOINTMENT
DISAPPROVE
DISASTER
DISASTROUS
DISBURSE
DISCIPLINE
DISCORD
DISCOUNT
DISCOURAGE
DISCUSS
DISCUSSED
DISCUSSION
DISGUISE
DISGUSTED
DISMAL

DISPERSED
DISPLAY
DISPOSITION
DISPUTE
DISSATISFIED
DISTINCT
DISTINCTION
DISTINCTLY
DISTINGUISH
DISTINGUISHED
DISTRIBUTED
DISTRIBUTION
DISTRICT
DIVED
DIVISION
DOCTRINE
DOCUMENT
DOMESTIC
DOMINATE
DORMITORY
DOUBTFUL
DOUBTLESS
DRAMATIC
DRAWN
DREADFUL
DRIFTED
DRIVEN
DROWNED
DRUGGIST
DUET
DUPLICATE
DURABLE
DURATION
DUTIES
DWELL
DYING
DYNAMIC
DYNAMITE
EARNEST
EARRING
EASEL
ECHOES
ECLIPSE
ECONOMICAL
ECONOMICS
ECONOMY
EDITION
EDITORIAL
EDUCATE
EDUCATIONAL
EFFECT
EFFECTIVE
EFFICIENT
ELABORATE
ELAPSED
ELASTIC
ELATION
ELECTRICAL
ELECTRICITY
ELECTROLYTE
ELECTRONIC
ELECTRONICS
ELEMENT
ELIGIBLE
ELIMINATE
EMBARGO
EMBARRASS
EMBLEM
EMBRACE
EMBROIDER
EMERGENCY
EMIGRANT
EMOTIONAL
EMPEROR
EMPHASIS
EMPLOYEE
EMPLOYER
EMPTINESS
ENAMEL
ENCOURAGE
ENCOURAGEMENT
ENDEAVOR
ENDLESSLY
ENDORSEMENT
ENDURANCE
ENDURE
ENGAGED
ENGINEER
ENGRAVED
ENLARGEMENT
ENORMOUS
ENORMOUSLY
ENROLL
ENTERPRISE
ENTERPRISING
ENTERTAINMENT
ENTHUSIASM
ENTHUSIASTIC
ENTITLE
ENTITLED
ENTRANCE
ENVIOUS
ENVIRONMENT
EPIDEMIC
EPIDERMIS
EQUALITY
EQUIP
EQUIPMENT
EQUIPPED
ERASE
ERECT
ERRAND
ESSAY
ESSENTIAL
ESTABLISHED
ESTEEM
ESTIMATE
ETHER
ETIQUETTE
EVADE
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EVENT
EVENTUALLY
EVIDENCE
EVIDENTLY
EXACTLY
EXAGGERATE
EXAGGERATED
EXCEEDINGLY
EXCELLENT
EXCEPTION
EXCEPTIONAL
EXCESSIVE
EXCITEMENT
EXCLAIMED
EXCURSION
EXECUTE
EXECUTIVE
EXEMPT
EXERCISE
EXHAUST
EXHAUSTED
EXHIBITION
EXIST
EXISTENCE
EXPEDITION
EXPENSIVE
EXPERIMENT
EXPIRATION
EXPIRE
EXPLAIN
EXPLANATION
EXPLICIT
EXPLODE
EXPLOIT
EXPLORATION
EXPLORING
EXPONENT
EXPOSURE
EXPRESSION
EXPULSION
EXTENDED
EXTENSION
EXTENSIVE
EXTENT
EXTINCT
EXTRAORDINARY
EXTREME
EXTREMELY
FACILITIES
FACTOR
FACULTY
FAITHFULLY
FAMILIAR
FANTASTIC
FANTASY
FASCINATING
FATAL
FATTENING
FAUCET
FAVORABLE
FAVORABLY
FEASIBLE
FEATURE
FEDERAL
FEDERATION
FEEBLE
FEMALE
FERROCIOUS
FERTILE
FERTILIZATION
FERTILIZE
FERTILIZER
FESTIVAL
FIBER
FICTION
FIDELITY
FINANCIAL
FINANCIER
FISCAL
FISHHOOK
FLEXIBLE
FLOURISH
FLUID
FOGGY
FOLLOWING
FOND
FOREHEAD
FOREIGN
FOREIGNER
FORFEIT
FORGIVE

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FORMULA
FOUL
FOUNDATION
FRACTURE
FRAGRANCE
FRANK
FRATERNITY
FRECKLE
FREEDOM
FREEZING
FREIGHT
FREQUENTLY
FRESHMAN
FRICTION
FRIENDLY
FRIGHT
FRONTIER
FROZEN
FULFILL
FUNCTION
FUND
FUNDAMENTAL
FUNERAL
FURNISH
FURTHERMORE
GALAXY
GALLERY
GALLOP
GALVANIZE
GARAGE
GARBAGE
GARDENER
GENERALLY
GENERATION
GENERATOR
GENEROSITY
GENIUS
GENTLEMEN
GENTLY
GEOGRAPHY
GIRAFFE
GLACIER
GLAMOROUS
GLIMPSE
GLORIOUS
GOODNESS
GORGE
GORGEOUS
GOSSIP
GOVERN
GRACEFUL
GRADUATE
GRADUATION
GRAMMAR
GRANDDAUGHTER
GRANDEUR
GRANT
GRAPH
GRATEFUL
GRATITUDE
GRAVITY
GREASE
GRIEVE
GRIEVOUS
GRIND
GROPE
GROSS
GROWTH
GUARANTEE
GUARD
GUARDIAN
GUIDE
GUILTY
GUITAR
HANDICAP
HANDLING
HANDSOME
HARMONICA
HARMONIOUS
HARMONIZING
HARMONY
HARNESS
HATED
HATRED
HAUNTED
HAZARD
HEADDRESS
HEADQUARTERS
HEDGE
HEIGHT
HEIR
HELICOPTER
HEMISPHERE
HENCE
HERD
HEREDITY
HERETOFORE
HESITATE
HINDRANCE
HISTORIC
HISTORICAL
HITCH
HOLIDAY
HONESTLY
HONORABLE
HORIZON
HORIZONTAL
HORRIBLE
HORSEPOWER
HOSTILITIES
HUDDLE
HUMBLE
HUMIDITY
HUMOR
HUNCH
HUNDREDTH
HUNGRY
HYDRAULIC
HYDROGEN
HYGIENE
ICICLE
IDEAL
IDENTIFICATION
IDLE
IDOL
IGNORANCE
ILLEGIBLE
ILLUSTRATED
IMAGE
IMAGINARY
IMAGINATION
IMAGINE
IMITATION
IMMEDIATE
IMMEDIATELY
IMMENSE
IMMIGRANT
IMMIGRATION
IMMUNE
IMPACT
IMPATIENT
IMPEL
IMPERFECT
IMPORTANCE
IMPOSSIBLE
IMPRESSION
IMPROVEMENT
IMPROVISE
INABILITY
INCIDENT
INCIDENTAL
INCIDENTALLY
INCLINE
INCOME
INCONVENIENCE
INCONVENIENT
INCORRECT
INDEPENDENCE
INDEX
INDICATE
INDIGESTION
INDIVIDUAL
INDULGE
INDULGENCE
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INDUSTRIES
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INFANTILE
INFECTION
INFERIOR
INFINITE
INFLUENCE
INHABITANT
INITIAL
INJURY
INN
INNER
INNING
INQUIRY
INSECTICIDE
INSIST
INSISTED
INSPIRATION
INSTALL
INSTALLATION
INSTANCE
INSTANTLY
INSTINCT
INSTITUTE
INSTITUTION
INSTRUCTION
INSTRUCTOR
INSTRUMENT
INSURANCE
INSURED
INTEGRATE
INTELLECTUAL
INTELLIGENCE
INTELLIGENT
INTEND
INTENSITY
INTENTION
INTERCEPT
INTERFERE
INTERIOR
INTERJECT
INTERJECTION
INTERLUDE
INTERMEDIATE
INTERMISSION

INTERNAL
INTERNATIONAL
INTERRUPT
INTERRUPTED
INTERSTATE
INTERVAL
INTERVIEW
INVALID
INVENTORY
INVESTIGATION
INVESTMENT
INVISIBLE
INVOICE
INVOLVED
IODINE
IRRIGATE
IRRIGATION
ISOLATE
ISSUED
ITEM
ITEMIZE
JACKKNIFE
JANITOR
JAZZ
JEALOUS
JEWELRY
JOURNAL
JOVIAL
JUDGMENT
JUDICIAL
JUNGLE
JUSTICE
JUSTIFY
JUVENILE
KITCHENETTE
KNITTED
LABOR
LABORATORY
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LATHE
LATTER
LAUNCHING
LEAGUE
LEASE
LECTURE
LEDGER
LEGAL
LEGISLATE
LEGISLATION
LEGISLATURE
LEGITIMATE
LEISURE
LEVY
LIABLE
LIBERAL
LIBERTY
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LIEUTENANT
LIGHTNING
LINEAR
LINEN
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LIQUOR
LITERACY
LITERARY
LITERATURE
LOBBY
LOCAL
LOCALITY
LOCALLY
LOCATION
LOGIC
LOGICAL
LOSING
LOSS
LOVER
LOYALTY
LUBRICATE
LUNCHEON
LUXURY
LYRICAL
MACADAM
MACHINERY
MADNESS
MAGAZINE
MAGICIAN
MAGNET
MAGNIFICENCE
MAGNIFICENT
MAINTAIN
MAINTENANCE
MAJOR
MAJORITY
MANAGEMENT
MANAGER
MANFULLY
MANHOOD
MANNERS
MANSION
MANTLE
MANUAL
MARINE
MARRIAGE
MARVELOUS
MATHEMATICS
MATURE
MATURITY
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MAYOR
MEADOW
MECHANICAL
MECHANIZE
MEDICAL
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MEMORIZE
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MENTAL
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MERCERIZE
MERCHANDISE
MERCURIAL
MERELY
MERIDIAN
MESSENGER
METAL
METEOR
METER
METRIC
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MICRON
MICROPHONE
MICROSCOPE
MICROSECOND
MIGRATE
MIGRATORY
MILEAGE
MILITARY
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MINIATURE
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MINISTER
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MINORITY
MINSTREL
MINUS
MIRACLE
MISCELLANEOUS
MISCHIEF
MISCHIEVOUS
MISERABLE
MISERY
MISSILE
MISSION
MISSPELL
MOCCASIN
MODIFIES
MODIFY
MOISTURE
MOLECULAR
MOLECULE
MONARCH
MONARCHY
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MORAL
MORTAL
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MOTIONED
MOTIVE
MOTORCADE
MUGWUMP
MULTIPLE
MURDER
MURDERED
MURMUR
MUSCLE
MUSHROOM
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MUTTON
MUTUAL
MYSTERIOUS
MYSTERY
NARRATIVE
NATIONALITY
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NATURALLY
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NAVIGATE
NEBULA
NECESSARILY
NECESSARY
NECESSITY
NECKLACE
NEGATIVE
NEGLECT
NEIGHBOR
NEPHEW
NEUTRAL
NEWSSTAND
NIECE
NIGHTTIME
NINTH
NITROGEN
NODDED
NOMINATION
NONRESIDENT

NONSENSE
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NOTATION
NOTICEABLE
NOTION
NOVEL
NUCLEAR
NUISANCE
NUMERAL
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NYLON
OBEDIENCE
OBEDIENT
OBLIGATION
OBLIGE
OBLIGED
OBSCURE
OBSERVATION
OBSERVATORY
OBSTACLE
OBVIOUS
OCCASION
OCCASIONALLY
OCCUPATION
OCCUPIED
OCCURRED
OCCURRENCE
OFFENSE
OFFICIAL
OLIVE
OLYMPIC
OMIT
OMITTED
OMITTING
OPERA
OPERATING
OPERATOR
OPPONENT
OPPORTUNITY
OPPOSITE
OPPRESS
ORACLE
ORBIT
ORCHARD
ORCHESTRA
ORCHID
ORDINAL
ORDINARILY
ORGANIZATION
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ORIGIN
ORIGINALITY
ORIGINALLY
ORNAMENT
ORNAMENTAL
ORPHAN
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OVERHEAD
OVERREACH
OVERRIDE
OVERRULE
OVERRUN
OXYGEN
PAGEANT
PAMPHLET
PANE
PANIC
PANTOMIME
PARACHUTE
PARADISE
PARAGRAPH
PARALLEL
PARALYZE
PARCEL
PARCEL POST
PARLIAMENT
PARTIAL
PARTICULAR
PARTICULARLY
PASSAGE
PASSENGER
PASTURIZE
PATENT
PATHETIC
PATIENCE
PATIENT
PATRIOT
PATRIOTIC
PATROL
PATROLLED
PATRONAGE
PATRONIZE
PATTERN
PEASANT
PECAN
PECULIAR
PENICILLIN
PEOPLE
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PERCEIVE
PERCEIVED
PERCENT
PERCENTAGE
PERENNIAL
PERFECTLY
PERFORMANCE
PERFORMED
PERIL
PERISH
PERMANENT
PERMISSION
PERMITTED
PERPENDICULAR
PERPLEX
PERSIST
PERSISTENT
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PHARMACY
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PHOTOGRAPH
PHRASE
PHYSICAL
PHYSICIAN
PHYSICS
PICTURESQUE
PIERCE
PIERCED
PILOT
PIRATE
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PLASTIC
PLATFORM
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PLUNDER
PLUNGE
PLUS
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POIGNANT
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POSSESSION
POSSIBILITY
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POTENTIAL
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PREFERENCE
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PROPELLER
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PROTEIN
PROTOPLASM
PROVIDE
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PUNCTURE
PUNISHED
PUNISHMENT
PURPOSEFUL
PURSUE
PYRAMID
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QUALIFIED
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QUARANTINE
QUARRY
QUESTIONNAIRE
RACCOON
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RADIATE
RADIATION
RADIUM
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RARE
RATIONAL
RAWHIDE
REACTION
READILY
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REALITY
REALIZED
REAR
REASONABLE
RECALL
RECEIPT
RECEIVING
RECEPTACLE
RECEPTION
RECESSED
RECITAL
RECOGNITION
RECOGNIZE
RECOMMEND
RECOMMENDATION
RECOMMENDED
RECREATION
RECTANGLE
REDUCTION
REFER
REFEREE
REFERENCE
REFERENDUM
REFERRED
REFLECTION
REFORM
REFRESHMENT
REFRIGERATOR
REFUGEE
REFUSAL
REFUSED
REGARDED
REGARDING
REGION
REGISTER
REGISTRATION
REGRET
REGRETTING
REGULATE
REHEARSAL
REIGN
REJOICE
RELATION
RELATIVE
RELAX
RELEASE
RELIABLE
RELIEF
RELIEVE
RELIEVED
RELIGION
RELIGIOUS
REMAINDER
REMARKABLE
REMEMBRANCE
REMITTANCE
REMNANT
REMOVAL
RENEWAL
REPEATED
REPEL
REPELLED
REPELLENT
REPETITION
REPLACE
REPORT
REPRESENT
REPRESENTATIVE
REPRODUCE
REPRODUCTION
REPTILE
REPUBLIC
REPUBLICAN
REQUEST
REQUIRED
REQUIREMENT
RESEARCH
RESEMBLE
RESERVATION
RESERVE
RESERVOIR
RESIDENCE
RESIDENTIAL
RESIGNATION
RESISTANCE
RESOLUTION
RESOURCE
RESPIRATION
RESPONSE
RESPONSIBILITY
RESPONSIBLE
RESTAURANT
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RESUME
RETAIL
RETENTION
RETREAT
RETRIEVE
REVELATION
REVENGE
REVENUE
REVERSE
REVERSIBLE
REVIEW
REVISE
REVISION
REVIVAL
REVOLT
REVOLTING
REVOLUTION
REVOLVE
REWARD
RHEUMATISM
RHUBARB
RHYME
RHYTHM
RIDDEN
RIDICULOUS
RISK
RODEO
ROLE
ROOMMATE
ROYAL
RURAL
SABOTAGE
SACHET
SACRED
SACRIFICE
SADDENED
SADDLE
SALARY
SANCTION
SANITARY
SARCASTIC
SATELLITE
SATISFACTION
SATISFACTORY
SATISFIED
SAVAGE
SCAFFOLD
SCALE
SCANDAL
SCARCELY

SCENT
SCHEDULE
SCHEDULED
SCHEME
SCHOLARSHIP
SCIENTIFIC
SCIENTIST
SCISSORS
SECTION
SECURE
SECURITY
SEDIMENT
SEGMENT
SEGREGATE
SEIZE
SEIZED
SELDOM
SELECTED
SELENOLOGY
SEMESTER
SEMIANNUAL
SEMICIRCLE
SEMICONSCIOUS
SENATE
SENATOR
SENIOR
SENSE
SENSIBLE
SENTIMENT
SEPARATE
SEPARATELY
SERGEANT
SERIAL
SERIOUS
SERIOUSLY
SERVICEABLE
SESSION
SETTLER
SEVENTY
SHAMEFUL
SHARING
SHEER
SHELVES
SHEPHERD
SHERIFF
SHIELD
SHIPMENT
SHUTTER
SIGNATURE
SIGNIFICANT
SILHOUETTE
SIMILAR
SIMPLY

SINGLE
SINGULAR
SITE
SITUATION
SKELETON
SKETCH
SKIING
SKILL
SKILLFUL
SLAVERY
SLIGHTLY
SLOPE
SNOBBISH
SOBER
SOCCER
SOCIETY
SOLAR
SOLEMN
SOLUTION
SOMEHOW
SOMEWHAT
SOPHOMORE
SORORITY
SOUFFLE
SOUGHT
SOUVENIR
SOW
SPECIALIST
SPECIES
SPECIFIC
SPECIFICATION
SPECIFIED
SPECIFY
SPECIMEN
SPECKLED
SPECTRUM
SPEEDOMETER
SPICE
SPIRIT
SPIRITUAL
SPITE
SPLENDID
SPRAY
SQUIRREL
STAFF
STANDARD
STARCH
STATIC
STATING
STATIONARY
STATIONERY
STATISTICS
STATUE

STATUS
STEEP
STENOGRAPHER
STETHOSCOPE
STEWING
STORAGE
STRAIGHTEN
STRAIT
STRESS
STRETCH
STRIP
STRUCTURE
STRUGGLED
STUBBORN
STUDIOUS
STUMBLED
STYLE
STYLISH
SUBDIVIDE
SUBMARINE
SUBSCRIBE
SUBSCRIPTION
SUBSIDE
SUBSTANCE
SUBSTANTIAL
SUBSTITUTE
SUBTLE
SUBURB
SUBWAY
SUCCEEDED
SUCCESSION
SUCCESSOR
SUFFICIENT
SUGGESTED
SUGGESTION
SUITABLE
SULFUR
SUMMARIZE
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SUPERFICIAL
SUPERINTENDENT
SUPERIOR
SUPERLATIVE
SUPERMARKET
SUPERSTITION
SUPERVISE
SUPERVISION
SUPREME
SURPASS
SURRENDER
SURVEY
SURVIVE

SUSPECT
SUSPICION
SUSPICIOUS
SWALLOW
SYLLABLE
SYMBOL
SYMPATHY
SYMPTOM
SYNCHRONIZE
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TACKLE
TACTICS
TAILOR
TANTALIZE
TARGET
TARIFF
TASK
TAXATION
TAXIDERMY
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TECHNICAL
TECHNIQUE
TEENAGER
TELECAST
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TELEPHONE
TELESCOPE
TELEVISION
TEMPORARY
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TERRIFIC
TERRITORIAL
TERRITORY
TERROR
TESTIMONY
TEXT
TEXTBOOK
TEXTURE
THEFT
THEME
THEORY
THERMOMETER
THERMOSTAT
THOROUGH
THOROUGHLY
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THREATEN
THRILLING
THRONE
THROUGHOUT
TIMID
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TISSUE
TOLERANCE
TOLERANT
TOMATO
TOMATOES
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TORTOISE
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TOURNAMENT
TOWER
TOWNSHIP
TRADITION
TRAFFIC
TRAGEDY
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TRANSFER
TRANSFERRED
TRANSFORM
TRANSFORMER
TRANSISTOR
TRANSLATE
TRANSMIT
TRANSMITTED
TRANSPARENT
TRANSPORTATION
TRAPEZE
TRAPPER
TREACHEROUS
TREASON
TREASURER
TREASURY
TREATY
TREMBLED
TREMENDOUS
TREND
TRIAL
TRIANGLE
TRIFLE
TRIMMED
TRIUMPH
TROOP
TROPICAL
TROUPE
TWILIGHT
TWISTED
TYPE
TYPEWRITER
TYRANNY
TYRANT
ULTIMATE
ULTRAVIOLET
UMBRELLA
UNABLE
UNANIMOUS
UNCONSCIOUS
UNDERRATE
UNDOUBTEDLY
UNDULY
UNFOLD
UNFORTUNATE
UNIFORM
UNIQUE
UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSE
UNIVERSITY
UNNECESSARY
UNPLEASANT
UNREASONABLE
UNVEIL
URBAN
URGE
URGENT
UTILIZE
VACCINE
VALUABLE
VALUED
VANISH
VANISHED
VANITY
VAPOR
VARIETY
VARY
VAST
VEHICLE
VEIL
VEIN
VENTILATOR
VENTURE
VERIFY
VERSION
VERTICAL
VESSEL
VETO
VIA
VIBRATE
VICINITY
VICTIM
VIOLATE
VIOLENCE
VIOLENT
VIRTUALLY
VISIBILITY
VISIBLE
VISION
VITAL
VITAMIN
VIVID
VOCABULARY
VOCAL
VOCATION
VOCATIONAL
VOLT
VOLUME
VOLUNTARY
VOLUNTEER
VOUCHER
VULCANIZE
WARRANT
WARRIOR
WATT
WEAKNESS
WEALTHY
WEAPON
WEIGHT
WELFARE
WHEREFORE
WHOLLY
WILDERNESS
WINDSHIELD
WINNER
WITHHOLD
WITNESS
WONDROUS
WORRY
WOVEN
WRAPPER
WREATH
WRITER
YEARN

Sample Item

Read this selection, paying careful attention to spelling.

Adapted from a student assignment:

[1] Write a composition describing a character from your imagination. [2] Write the composition in three seperate paragraphs. [3] First, provide a physical description of your character, who may be an animal or a human being. [4] Next, discuss the character's personality. [5] Finally, write about the place where the character lives.

In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **spelling**?

A Part [1]

B Part [2]

C Part [3]

D None of the above

This communication contains several words that are difficult to spell. Read the selection carefully. Try to find a word that is misspelled. If you do not locate a misspelled word during your first reading, reread the passage until you either find a spelling error or you feel confident that the passage has no spelling errors.

The sentence labeled [2] contains a misspelled word: "separate" is misspelled as "seperate." This is a common spelling error, as is evidenced by the fact that it was missed by over one-third of the TECAT field-test examinees. Answer B, "Part [2]," contains this error and is, therefore, the correct answer choice for this item.

Answers A and C are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences are written without spelling errors. Answer D, "None of the above," is also incorrect because the passage does contain a spelling error.

PRACTICE TEST FOR MECHANICS

On the following pages you will find a practice test. Answer each item. When you have finished all five items, check your answers on page 55. If you miss any items, read why the answer you chose was incorrect.

Adapted from a letter of recommendation:

[1] Dear Ms. Bertrand:

[2] Kelly Fields has been a student in my French II class since September of this year. [3] She is an excellent student whose language skills exceed those of most of her peers. [4] Her school interests are wide and varied, ranging from foreign languages to Music. [5] I feel certain that Miss Fields' enthusiasm and abilities would make her a valuable asset to your school.

[6] Respectfully,

[7] Leslie Russell
[8] Teacher
[9] Gardena High School

1. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization**?

A Part [2]

B Part [4]

C Part [5]

D None of the above

Adapted from a student assignment:

[1] Select a character from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. [2] Imagine what it would be like to be that person for one day. [3] Use your imagination and what you know about the character to write a description of how the character spends the day. [4] Your story should take place in France.

2. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **capitalization**?

- **A** Part [1]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [4]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to parents:

[1] Dear Mr. and Mrs. Gaines:

[2] Your son is having some problems in my Spanish II class. [3] He received very low scores on several of his tests. [4] Please contact me as soon as possible; so that we can arrange a time for a meeting. [5] Perhaps, at a time that is convenient for you, we can arrive at some possible solutions.

[6] Sincerely,

[7] Alejandro Zepeda
[8] Teacher
[9] Milton Jr. High School

3. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **punctuation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a student assignment:

[1] Your assignment is to write a report based on one of the field trips, we have taken this year. [2] You may choose either the Railroad Museum, the Bishop's Palace, or the Elissa as the topic of your paper. [3] Read at least one book about the history of the location you select. [4] Write about what you learned from the book, relating the information to your personal impressions from the field trip. [5] Your paper should be approximately three pages in length.

4. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **punctuation**?

- **A** Part [1]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a student assignment:

[1] I have written a list of vocabulary items on the board. [2] Use your dictionaries to look up the meanings of these words, and then try to write a sentence using each word. [3] When you have completed your independent work, we will discuss some of your sentences and talk about ways to properly use these words. [4] Raise your hand if you need any asistance.

5. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **spelling**?

- **A** Part [1]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [4]
- **D** None of the above

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The correct answers to the practice test for mechanics are No. 1: B, No. 2: D, No. 3: B, No. 4: A, and No. 5: C.

Item 1 is a capitalization item. You are asked to identify which part of the communication, if any, contains a capitalization error. The correct answer is B, "Part [4]," because the corresponding sentence contains a capitalization error: "Music" should not be capitalized (See capitalization rule No. 24.). Answer A, "Part [2]," and answer C, "Part [5]," are incorrect answer choices because their respective sentences demonstrate proper capitalization. Answer D, "None of the above," is incorrect because the communication does, in fact, contain a capitalization error. If you selected this answer choice, you may have thought that "music," when considered as a school course, should be capitalized. Remember that a word referring to a subject is not capitalized unless it is a proper noun (such as a language) or is followed by a number (as in "Music I").

Item 2 is also a capitalization item. The correct answer is D, "None of the above," because the communication contains no capitalization errors. Answer choice A, B, and C all correspond to sentences in the communication that contain proper capitalization. Therefore, they are all incorrect answer choices. If you chose answer A, you may have thought that the title *A Tale of Two Cities* contained a capitalization error. Capitalization rule No. 17 deals with capitalization in titles. You may want to review this rule if you are uncertain about when to use capital letters in titles. The only capitalization necessary in part [3] (answer B) is at the beginning of the sentence; it contains no proper nouns. The only capital letters required in part [4] (answer C) are at the beginning of the sentence and to begin the name of the country "France."

Item 3 is a punctuation item. You are asked to identify which part of the communication, if any, contains a punctuation error. The correct answer to this item is B, "Part [4]." The corresponding sentence contains an improperly placed semicolon. Answer A, "Part [2]," is properly punctuated. Answer C, "Part [5]," contains an interrupting expression correctly enclosed by commas. Finally, answer D, "None of the above," cannot be the correct answer because the communication does contain an error. If you selected this answer, it might be a good idea to review the use of semicolons between independent clauses not joined by coordinating conjunctions. (In this sentence, a semicolon would be appropriate only if the term "so that" were deleted.)

Item 4 is also a punctuation item. The correct answer is A, "Part [1]," because the sentence contains an improper use of a comma. The use of a comma after "field trips" is unnecessary and incorrect. (If you read this sentence aloud, you can hear that a pause at this point in the sentence is inappropriate.) Answers B, "Part [4]," and C, "Part [5]," are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences are correctly punctuated. If you selected answer B, you may want to review the use of commas to set off nonessential participial phrases. Part [5] (answer C) is correctly terminated by a period and requires no other punctuation. Answer D, "None of the above," is also an incorrect answer choice because the communication does contain a punctuation error.

The last item, item 5, is a spelling item. You are asked to identify which part of the communication, if any, contains a spelling error. The correct answer is C, "Part [4]," because the word "assistance" in the corresponding sentence is misspelled as "asistance." Answers A, "Part [1]," and B, "Part [3]," are incorrect answer choices because all words in the two corresponding sentences are spelled correctly. Answer D, "None of the above," is an incorrect answer choice because the communication contains a spelling error.

Summary

Multiple-choice writing items testing mechanics require paying careful attention to detail. In addition, TECAT examinees must possess a familiarity with eligible capitalization and punctuation rules and with the correct spellings of words that appear on the exit-level TEA Spelling List.

When approaching a TECAT mechanics item, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Read the question** to find out whether you are being asked to look for a possible error in capitalization, punctuation, or spelling.

2. **Read the passage** slowly and carefully. Try to locate an error of the type designated in the question.

3. **Reread the passage** to either (1) make sure that the error you located is valid, (2) locate an error that you missed during the first reading, or (3) confirm that there is no error in the communication.

4. **Read the answer choices** to see which answer choice corresponds to the section containing the error you found.

5. **Select an answer choice.** Select the letter (A, B, or C) that corresponds to the part of the communication in which you found the error or, if no error was found, select answer D, "None of the above."

SENTENCE FORMATION

How the Skill is Measured

Because well-formed sentences are essential to effective communication, there are 10 items dealing with sentence formation on the multiple-choice part of the TECAT Writing Section. All sentence formation items focus on the examinee's ability to identify the two most frequent errors in sentence formation, namely, **sentence fragments** and **run-on sentences.**

In each of the 10 sentence formation items, the examinee is presented with a written communication that an educator might write to students, parents, colleagues, or community members. All parts of the communication are identified by bracketed numbers such as [1] or [2]. The examinee is asked to identify whether there is a sentence formation error in any of three parts of the communication. If there are no sentence formation errors, the examinee is to mark answer choice D, "None of the above."

Skill Analysis

Because the TECAT sentence formation items deal exclusively with sentence fragments and run-on sentences, you need to be able to identify these errors when they are present.

Sentence fragments. A complete sentence must contain a **subject** and a **predicate.** A subject or a predicate alone, without the other, is only a fragment of a sentence; it is not a complete sentence. For example, note the three word groups presented below. The first is a complete sentence. It contains a subject, "The school custodian," and a predicate, "removed the litter after the basketball game." The second is a sentence fragment containing only a subject (along with a number of words that modify, or describe, that subject). The third is a sentence fragment containing only a predicate (also with a number of modifiers).

Complete Sentence: The school custodian removed the litter after the basketball game.

Sentence Fragment: The young, enthusiastic, first-year teacher.

Sentence Fragment: Moved the teacher's desk toward the center of the classroom.

A predicate is needed in the first of these two sentence fragments (the fragment about the first-year teacher). In its simplest form, a predicate consists of a verb (an action word such as "throws" or some form of a being-verb such as "was"). Thus, all that is needed to turn that subject-only sentence fragment into a complete sentence is a verb, such as "spoke." Then the complete sentence would be: "The young, enthusiastic, first-year teacher spoke."

A subject is needed to fix the second sentence fragment (about moving the teacher's desk). As it stands, the sentence fragment consists of only a predicate, that is, an action verb ("moved"), and an object of that action. A noun such as "Sally" or a pronoun such as "he" can be added to create a complete sentence such as "Sally moved the teacher's desk toward the center of the classroom."

Remember, when you're trying to identify a sentence fragment, look for a missing subject or predicate. Don't be confused by the number of words in a word group. Because several modifiers can be added to either a subject or a predicate, length does not distinguish between sentence fragments and complete sentences. For example, "He runs." is a complete sentence, containing both a subject and a predicate. In contrast, "Having left the faculty meeting early in order to make another appointment, the principal." is a lengthy sentence fragment that lacks a predicate.

Unfortunately, the presence of a subject and a predicate does not automatically make a word group a complete sentence because the word group may be a dependent clause. This means that the clause depends on another clause to express a complete thought. To illustrate, in the two examples below we have transformed the complete sentence in the first word group to a sentence fragment in the second word group merely by adding "because."

Complete Sentence: Juan went to the nurse's office. (complete thought)

Sentence Fragment: Because Juan went to the nurse's office. (incomplete thought)

By adding the word "because" we have changed the sentence (consisting of a single **independent clause**) into a **dependent** subordinate clause. Such clauses cannot "stand alone" because they do not make sense without the things they are supposed to modify or explain. Alone, they express incomplete thoughts. Thus, when you find word groups that begin with such words as "after," "although," or "until," be sure that an **independent** clause (containing a subject and a predicate) is also present to complete the thought.

Remember, if the word group (1) has a subject and predicate and (2) is not a dependent clause, it is a complete sentence. Look for these features as you try to identify word groups that are sentence fragments instead of complete sentences.

Run-On Sentences. The second major category of sentence formation errors involves run-on sentences or, as they are sometimes called, "run-ons." A run-on sentence consists of two complete sentences that have been run together without a conjunction and without proper punctuation. A sample run-on sentence is provided below. In it, two separate sentences are inappropriately joined to form a run-on.

Run-On Sentence: Manuel did his homework Janet didn't do hers.

A run-on sentence is one in which two independent clauses have been joined without a coordinating conjunction (such as and, but, or, nor, for). An independent clause contains both a subject and a predicate of its own. The first sentence below is a run-on because it lacks a coordinating conjunction between the two independent clauses. The second sentence employs a coordinating conjunction properly, hence is not a run-on. It is a complete, compound sentence (two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction).

Run-On Sentence: The school board established policy the superintendent carried out such policies.

Compound Sentence: The school board established policy, and the superintendent carried out such policies.

Sometimes a semicolon can be used to separate two independent clauses; however, this will not be tested on the TECAT. Errors on the TECAT sentence formation items will arise either because no punctuation or only a comma will be used to separate the two independent clauses in run-on sentences. It should be stressed that a comma alone cannot be used to separate two independent clauses. If you find two independent clauses separated by only a comma, without a coordinating conjunction (such as "and," "but," "or," etc.), then you have a run-on.

For all of the TECAT sentence formation items, be sure to read carefully each of the three word-groups identified in the item's response options. If you find no run-on sentences or sentence fragments, then you can mark the "None of the above" response with confidence.

Sample Items

Read this selection, paying careful attention to sentence formation.

> Adapted from a note to a student:
>
> [1] Regarding the social studies report you handed in last week. [2] I was very pleased with your work. [3] You covered many aspects of the American Revolution in clear, concise writing. [4] As your report revealed, our country has a heritage of which we should all be proud.

1. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

   A Part [1]

   B Part [2]

   C Part [4]

   D None of the above

Read the selection carefully, looking for an error in sentence formation. Try to locate a sentence fragment or a run-on. If the entire passage appears to be written in complete sentences, reread it until you either find a sentence formation error or are certain that there are no such errors in the communication.

The correct answer to this item is A, "Part [1]." Part [1] is not a complete sentence; it is a sentence fragment. It lacks both a subject and predicate, and prompts the question, "What about the social studies report?" The thought is incomplete.

Answers B, "Part [2]," and C, "Part [4]," are incorrect answer choices because they represent complete sentences, each with a clear subject and predicate. In Part [2], the subject is "I," and the predicate is "was very pleased with your work." In Part [4], the subject is "our country," and the predicate is "has a heritage of which we should all be proud." The phrase "As your report revealed" introduces the main sentence. Answer D, "None of the above," is incorrect because the passage contains a sentence formation error.

Read this selection paying careful attention to sentence formation. Try to locate a sentence fragment or a run-on.

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Mr. Sanchez:

[2] Members of the school orchestra are looking forward to the annual Spring Concert for parents and friends next Thursday night. [3] I am especially proud of this talented group they have worked very hard this semester. [4] Would it be possible to schedule a dress rehearsal for next Wednesday? [5] In preparation for the big night, we would like to perform for the student body and faculty.

[6] Thank you,

[7] Wendy Graham
[8] Music Teacher

2. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

This communication contains a run-on in Part [3]. Therefore, the correct answer choice for this item is B. This group of words actually consists of two complete sentences: "I am especially proud of this talented group," and "They have worked very hard this semester." These sentences are run together in the item without being properly connected by a conjunction such as "and" or "because."

Answers A, "Part [2]," and C, "Part [5]," are incorrect answer choices because they represent complete sentences. The subject in part [2] is "Members of the school orchestra"; the rest of the sentence is the predicate. Part [5] begins with an introductory phrase, "In preparation for the big night." The subject of the sentence is "we," and the predicate is "would like to perform for the student body and faculty." Answer D, "None of the above," is incorrect because the communication does, in fact, contain a sentence formation error.

PRACTICE TEST FOR SENTENCE FORMATION

On the following pages you will find a practice test. Answer each item. When you have completed all five items, check your answers on page 60. If you miss any items, read why the answer you chose was incorrect.

Adapted from a letter of recommendation:

[1] Dear Award Committee:

[2] Each year the faculty at Monroe Junior High School selects a student for the Student of the Year Award. [3] I would like to nominate a student who has been a tremendous asset to this campus. [4] Gerardo Valenzuela deserves this award, his outstanding academic record makes him a worthy candidate.

[5] Respectfully,

[6] Ben Burns
[7] Teacher

1. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [4]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Ms. Santana:

[2] One of my students was injured while playing on the bars at lunch time. [3] Clearly, steps must be taken to avoid similar accidents. [4] I do not think, however, that banning students from the play area is the proper solution. [5] I propose that teachers' aides provide supervision to allow students to play safely during lunch.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Marv Howard

2. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Ms. Ramon:

[2] Would it be possible to switch library periods with your class on Thursday, April 26? [3] I will have to leave at noon on that day for an afternoon seminar. [4] My substitute will administer a test in the afternoon, I would like to supervise my students during the morning library period. [5] Please let me know if this is acceptable.

[6] Thank you,

[7] David King

3. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [3]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter of recommendation:

[1] Dear Selection Committee:

[2] Upon learning that a statewide committee is being formed to develop science objectives. [3] I would like to recommend an educator at Jamestown High School, Tabitha Walters, whose credentials are outstanding. [4] She designed our science program, which is considered to be one of the finest in the state. [5] After 28 years of dedicated service in the field of education, she would be an excellent candidate for your committee.

[6] Respectfully,

[7] Dr. Noreen Reynolds
[8] Principal, Jamestown High School

4. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [5]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to parents:

[1] Dear Parents:

[2] The tenth-grade health class at Caldwell High School includes a section on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. [3] For instructional assistance, we will be showing an excellent film covering this topic. [4] We need your permission to let your child see this film. [5] Please sign the enclosed permission slip and check either the "yes" or "no" box. [6] For further information, please call the main office.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Dee Martinez
[9] Counselor

5. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **sentence formation**?

- **A** Part [2]
- **B** Part [3]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The correct answers to the practice test for sentence formation are: No. 1: C, No. 2: D, No. 3: B, No. 4: A, No. 5: D.

Item 1 contains a run-on in part [4]; therefore, the correct answer choice is C. This run-on consists of two independent clauses connected with a comma. The run-on should be divided into two complete sentences or connected with a conjunction—either a coordinating conjunction such as "and" or a subordinating conjunction such as "because" (which would be more logical in this instance). Answer A, "Part [2]," and answer B, "Part [3]," are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences are formed correctly. If you selected answer D, "None of the above," then you mistakenly thought that all the sentences in the communication were properly formed. You may wish to review how to join two complete sentences.

The correct answer to item 2 is D, "None of the above," because this communication contains no sentence formation errors. Answers A, B, and C are, therefore, incorrect answer choices. They represent properly formed, complete sentences.

Item 3 contains a run-on in Part [4]; answer B is, therefore, the correct answer choice. Part [4] consists of two complete sentences: "My substitute will administer a test in the afternoon," and "I would like to supervise my students during the morning library period." These sentences are connected by a comma in this communication, creating a run-on. A conjunction is needed to properly form a compound sentence. Answers A and C are incorrect answer choices because they represent complete sentences. Answer D, "None of the above," is incorrect because the communication contains a sentence formation error.

Item 4 contains a sentence fragment in Part [2]; answer choice A is, therefore, the correct answer. This sentence fragment is just one long phrase introduced by the preposition "upon." Actually, this phrase leads into part [3] ("Upon learning . . . , I would like to recommend. . ."). Answers B and C are incorrect answer choices because they represent sentences that are complete and can stand alone. Answer D is incorrect because a sentence formation error exists in the communication.

The correct answer to item 5 is D, "None of the above." The communication contains no errors in sentence formation.

Summary

Solving sentence formation items involves being able to recognize complete sentences and to determine when a group of words is actually a sentence fragment or a run-on.

When approaching a TECAT sentence formation item, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Read the passage** slowly and carefully. Be on the lookout for a fragment or a run-on.

2. **Read the answer choices.** If you think you have located a fragment or a run-on, see if that part of the communication is designated as an answer choice. If not, **reread the parts of the communication that are listed in the answer choices.** Study these groups of words carefully; see if you can find a fragment or a run-on among them.

3. **Select an answer choice.** Select A, B, or C if one of the corresponding parts of the communication is a sentence fragment or a run-on. Select answer choice D, "None of the above," if all three groups of words to which the A, B, and C answer choices refer form complete sentences.

ENGLISH USAGE

Even if an educator were able to write a communication that was otherwise perfect, errors in how words were used could still seriously detract from the communication's clarity. For this reason, 10 TECAT multiple-choice writing items deal with English usage.

How the Skill is Measured

As with other multiple-choice writing items on the TECAT, the examinee is given a written communication that an educator might write to students, parents, colleagues, or community members. All parts of the communication are identified by bracketed numbers such as [1] or [2]. The examinee is then asked to identify whether an error in English usage is present in any of three parts of the communication. English usage errors will be drawn from a specified set of usage rules. If there are no usage errors, the examinee is to mark answer D, "None of the above."

Skill Analysis

People often decide rather automatically what words to use in written communication. For many individuals, the way words "sound" in a sentence guides the choice of words. However, this practice can often lead to errors in word choice—errors sometimes so habitual that the "wrong" (non-standard) word sounds "right."

Five categories of usage rules are tested by the TECAT's English usage items: **agreement**, **verb tense**, **pronoun usage**, **adjective/adverb usage**, and **homonym selection**. Each category covers a substantial amount of content. This self-study guide describes the major features of each usage category. Clearly, however, it is impossible to discuss all the potential usage errors in each category. If you feel that you need additional review of the usage rules after completing the practice test, consult one or more of the textbooks typically used in secondary school English courses. Most schools have a variety of such textbooks available.

We turn now to the five categories of English usage rules that are eligible for testing on the TECAT. Remember *that you must not* only be able to detect usage errors when they are present, but also to recognize when no usage errors are present. Thus, you need to focus on both the correct way of following a particular English usage rule and the ways in which such a rule can be violated.

AGREEMENT

There are two types of agreement eligible to be tested on the TECAT. The first of these deals with **subject-verb agreement**. The second deals with **pronoun-antecedent agreement**. We shall consider them in that order.

Subjects and predicates must agree in number and in person.

A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb. Identify the subject and the verb in each of the following sentences:

My sister works in a travel agency.
His next-door neighbor makes too much noise.

My sisters work in a travel agency.
His next-door neighbors make too much noise.

In the first two sentences, the singular subjects "sister" and "neighbor" take singular verbs, "works" and "makes." Note that these singular verb forms end in "s." This applies to most regular verbs in the present tense used with a third-person singular subject—in other words, with any singular subject other than "I," which is the first person, and "you," which is the second person. Examples of third-person singular subjects are "he," "she," "it," "my aunt Matilda," "the student," and "the red chair." This category includes many possible singular subjects, and their regular present-tense verb forms generally end in "s."

The other two sentences are the plural versions of the first. Here, the plural subjects "sisters" and "neighbors" take plural verbs, "work" and "make." Note that although the plural nouns end in "s," the plural verbs do **not** end in "s."

Some verbs do not follow these rules in predictable ways. The common irregular verbs "be" and "have" are conjugated in the present tense as follows:

I am	we are	I have	we have
you are	you are	you have	you have
he, she, it is	they are	he, she, it has	they have

Even for irregular verbs, the third-person singular (he, she, it) forms still end in "s." Study these forms. Avoid nonstandard expressions such as "I is" and "she have"; these are common errors that are likely to appear as mistakes in TECAT usage items.

Irregular forms are more common in the past tense (for example, "went" as the past tense form of "go" and "brought" as the past tense form of "bring"). Past participles also frequently have irregular forms ("have chosen," "have drunk"). In most composition textbooks, the term "irregular verb" refers to a verb whose past participle and past tense forms are not formed in the usual way (that is, by attaching "-en" and "-ed", respectively). Study these forms if they give you any difficulty.

Before you can decide on an appropriate verb form, you need to decide whether a subject is singular or plural. Sometimes, as in the examples discussed above, this is a simple process. In other situations, however, you may need to think twice before deciding on the number of a particular subject. Consider the following groups of sentences.

A

One of my cats is black.
Mary, who lives next door to my parents, plays golf.
A knowledge of usage rules helps you to write.

B

Neither of you has told me the truth.
Everyone in the room was dozing.
Each of the students is reading.

C

Several of my friends have visited Washington, D.C.
Many at this school are concerned.
Few problems are impossible to solve.
Both of the counselors attend staff meetings.

Groups A, B, and C illustrate cases in which the number of the subject is not changed by a phrase following the subject. In Group A, "one," "many," and "knowledge" are clearly singular subjects. This fact is not changed by the plural nouns ("cats," "parents," and "rules") that appear in the intervening phrases. Do not be confused by the fact that these plural nouns occur immediately before the verbs; this does **not** make them the subjects of these sentences. In Group B, "neither," "everyone" and "each" are pronouns that are always singular, even if a plural noun appears in the following phrase. Other pronouns that are always singular are "either," "everybody," "no one," "nobody," "anyone," "anybody," "someone," and "somebody." Group C, on the other hand, represents pronouns that are always plural, regardless of what follows them: "several," "many," "few," and "both."

D

All of the work is done.
All of the cars in the parking lot are red.
Some of this food looks delicious.
Some of these students look tired.

Most of the room has been painted.
Most of the rooms have been painted.

Group D presents pronouns that may be either singular or plural. In these sentences, unlike in the sentences in the previous sentence groups, the number of the subject is determined by the noun that appears in the phrase after the pronoun. "All of the work" is singular; "all of the cars" is a plural subject because "cars" is plural. Similarly, "some of the food" is a singular subject because "food" is singular, and "some of these students" is plural; and "most of the room" is a singular subject," while "most of the rooms" is plural.

E

Theresa and Jake are on the committee.
The president and the vice-president were at the awards dinner.

F

Neither you nor she likes speaking in public.
Either Kim or Dave begins the presentation.

Groups E and F represent compound subjects, subjects that are created by joining two or more nouns together with "and" or "or." Generally, compound subjects formed with "and" are plural, as in the first two sentences in Group E. "Theresa and Jake" are clearly two people, as are "the president and the vice-president." Compound subjects joined with "or" or "nor" are generally followed by a singular predicate as in the example presented in F.

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and in gender. A pronoun's antecedent is the noun to which it refers. The gender of that noun is either masculine, feminine, or neuter, and the pronoun must be of the same gender as its antecedent. It must also be of the same number, that is, singular or plural. The examples provided in the previous section may help you to determine the number of a noun. In TECAT items involving this aspect of English usage, the pronoun and its antecedent will always appear in the same sentence, as in the following correct and incorrect examples. In each sentence the pronoun and its antecedent have been italicized.

Correct (personal pronoun): When George came out of the classroom after the exam, he looked flustered.

Correct (possessive pronoun): My aunt and uncle painted their house last weekend.

Incorrect (mismatch in number): When the girls arrived, she went into the living room together.

Incorrect (mismatch in number): Each jacket was hung on their rack.

Incorrect (mismatch in gender): Following Mary's victory, he accepted the trophy.

Incorrect (mismatch in gender): Each of the women brought his own recipe.

If you find a pronoun in a TECAT English usage item, be sure to determine whether or not it agrees with the noun to which it logically refers.

VERB TENSE

Verb tense must be formed correctly. This aspect of English usage involves (1) being aware of the time sense of a sentence and (2) recognizing the tenses represented by regular and irregular verb forms.

The time sense of a sentence tells you what verb tense is appropriate. Time indicators such as "yesterday," "right now," and "the day after tomorrow" place an action in the past, the present, and the future, respectively. We know that sentences such as the following are not logical, because a specified time sense has been violated:

Incorrect: Yesterday I will talk to the superintendent. ("Yesterday" indicates a past event, but the verb "will talk" is a future-tense form.)

Incorrect: Next year he retired. ("Next year" indicates a future event, but the verb "retired" is a past-tense form.)

Once you have determined the time sense of a sentence and selected the proper tense for the verb, you must be able to recognize correct and incorrect verb forms within the various tenses. Study regular and irregular verb forms so that you can become familiar with them. This knowledge will prove useful not only in the area of verb tense, but also when considering instances of subject-verb agreement.

PRONOUN USAGE

There are three rules associated with pronoun usage that are eligible for testing in the TECAT English usage items. In essence, these rules call for the use of pronouns that accurately employ the **nominative**, **objective**, and **possessive** cases. **Nominative** case pronouns represent subjects. They carry out action rather than receive it; for example, "I broke the window." **Objective** case pronouns receive action; for example, "Flora patted me on the back." **Possessive** case pronouns, as the term implies, are used to show ownership or possession; for example, "Several students from my class participated in the science fair."

Presented below is a table of personal pronouns and cases, both singular and plural, for all three persons.

Personal Pronoun Chart

	Case		
Person	**Nominative**	**Objective**	**Possessive**
Singular			
First	I	me	my, mine
Second	you	you	your, yours
Third	he	him	his
	she	her	her, hers
	it	it	its
Plural			
First	we	us	our, ours
Second	you	you	your, yours
Third	they	them	their, theirs

Let us now turn to the instances in which each of the three pronoun cases is required.

- **Nominative Case: The nominative case of a pronoun must be used in all simple or compound subjects of sentences or clauses.**

The following are examples of using objective case pronouns when the nominative case is required:

Incorrect: Us sold cookies and cupcakes at the bake sale.
(**Correct**: We sold cookies and cupcakes at the bake sale.)
Incorrect: Tommy and her were late because the school bus had broken down.
(**Correct**: Tommy and she were late because the school bus had broken down.)

Note that in both of these examples, the pronouns are serving as **subjects** of clauses or sentences. Thus, in each case, a **nominative case** pronoun is required. In particular, pay attention to compound subjects. The pronoun in the compound noun phrase "Tommy and her" indicates an object, not a subject. This becomes clear when you mentally delete the "Tommy and"; you would not say, "Her was late," and it is just as wrong to say, "Tommy and her were late."

- **Objective case: The objective case of a pronoun must be used in all simple or compound objects of verbs or prepositions.**

Nouns and pronouns that are objective case are used as objects: direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions. Presented below are examples of using nominative case pronouns when objective case pronouns should be used.

Incorrect: She invited Jim and I. (direct object)
(**Correct**: She invited Jim and me.)

Incorrect: Chris gave they the rulers. (indirect object)
(**Correct**: Chris gave them the rulers.)

Incorrect: For Bill and I, it was love at third sight. (object of preposition)
(**Correct**: For Bill and me, it was love at third sight.)

Note that in two of these three examples a compound object has been used, that is, "Jim and I" and "Bill and I." The misuse of the nominative pronoun I in such situations is particularly common. Be wary of such misuses. A good way to check on the appropriateness of a pronoun in a compound object is to mentally delete the rest of the compound (for example, "She invited me." "For me, it was love at third sight.")

- **Possessive Case: The possessive case of pronouns must be formed correctly.**

There are two important things to remember about possessive personal pronouns (For a list of these pronouns, see the Personal Pronoun Chart on page 63.): (1) they never contain apostrophes; and (2) they are divided into two types that are used in different situations.

Although possessive nouns* do contain an apostrophe ("Albert's dog," "the principal's hat"), possessive personal pronouns do not ("his dog," "her hat," "his," "hers"). Common usage errors include writing the contraction "it's," meaning "it is," when the possessive pronoun "its" was intended; writing the contraction "they're," meaning "they are," when the possessive pronoun "their" was intended; and using the contraction "who's," meaning "who is," when the intended word was "whose."

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* Words such as "everyone" and "somebody," which are called "indefinite pronouns," also take an apostrophe in the possessive form ("everyone's health," "somebody's book").

There are two kinds of personal possessive pronouns. "My," "your," "her," "its," "our," and "their" are always used before a noun. (For example, "Our car is in the garage.") "Mine," "yours," "hers," "ours," and "theirs" are never used before a noun; they function as though they contained the noun. (For example, "The blue car is ours.") "His" can be used in both ways. Do not confuse these two types of pronouns.

ADJECTIVE/ADVERB USAGE

The TECAT tests three usage areas with regard to adjectives and adverbs: (1) when to use an adjective and when to use an adverb; (2) negation; and (3) comparative and superlative forms.

- **Adjective and Adverb Use: An adjective must be used to modify nouns or pronouns; an adverb must be used to modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.**

To "modify" a word means to describe the word or to say something about the word that makes it more meaningful. Adjectives are used to modify nouns and pronouns. Adverbs are used to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

In general, you can recognize an adverb by its "-ly" ending. Most adverbs are formed by adding this ending to an adjective. (For example, "happy" is an adjective and "happily" is an adverb.) However, some adjectives also end in "-ly," such as "silly," "lovely," and "friendly." You can tell that these are adjectives because "sil," "love," and "friend" are not adjectives.

In judging whether an adjective or adverb is required, it is important to determine what is being modified. Because adjectives must modify nouns or pronouns, it would be an error to, for example, use an adjective to modify a verb. Likewise, it would be an error to use an adverb to modify a noun or a pronoun. Correct uses are illustrated in the following sentences:

Adjective modifying	**noun:**	Perry loves to eat soft cookies.
	pronoun:	They were wonderful.
Adverb modifying	**verb:**	The band played softly.
	adjective:	They found a very soft pillow.
	adverb:	The boy ran extremely quickly.

Here are some examples of errors in the use of adjectives and adverbs:

Incorrect: The ball rolled slow down the driveway.
(Correct: The ball rolled slowly down the driveway.)

Incorrect: Don't speak too loud when you give your speech.
(Correct: Don't speak too loudly when you give your speech.)

Incorrect: The colors in her dress are too brightly.
(Correct: The colors in her dress are too bright.)

- **Negation: Only one negative word (including "scarcely" and "hardly") may be used to negate the same idea in a sentence.**

This rule tells you to avoid the use of double negatives such as "He doesn't never tie his shoelaces." Presented below are further examples of sentences involving negation.

Correct: Harold doesn't ever need to be told twice. (single negation)
Incorrect: He hardly never is on time. (double negation)
Incorrect: Marie doesn't like no one. (double negation)

- **Adjective and Adverb Form: The comparative and superlative forms of all adjectives and adverbs must be formed correctly.**

Adjectives and adverbs have comparative and superlative forms that are used to show degree or extent. A comparative form is used to compare something with something else. It is usually formed either by adding the suffix "-er" or by preceding the adjective or adverb with the word "more." A superlative form is used when comparing more than two things. It is generally formed by adding the suffix "-est" or by preceding the adjective or adverb with the word "most." For the TECAT, you need to know (1) the comparative and superlative forms of various adjectives and adverbs, and (2) when the comparative should be used and when the superlative should be used.

First we'll consider the three adjectives/adverbs that have irregular comparative and superlative forms. These are the only forms that do not either add "-er" or "-est" or use "more" or "most."

	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
bad (adj.)	worse	worst
good (adv.) well (adj.)	better	best
many (adj.) much (adj. or adv.)	more	most

Other one-syllable adjectives and adverbs add "-er" for their comparative forms and "-est" for their superlative forms. For example:

		COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
nice	(adj.)	nicer	nicest
big	(adj.)	bigger	biggest
light	(adj.)	lighter	lightest

Some two-syllable modifiers (that is, adjectives and adverbs) form their comparatives and superlatives by adding the suffixes "-er" and "-est," respectively. Others form their comparatives and superlatives with "more" and "most."

		COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
funny	(adj.)	funnier	funniest
little	(adj.)	littler	littlest
friendly	(adj.)	friendlier	friendliest
slowly	(adv.)	more slowly	most slowly
thoughtful	(adj.)	more thoughtful	most thoughtful

Modifiers containing more than two syllables use "more" and "most" to form their comparative and superlative forms.

		COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
imaginative	(adj.)	more imaginative	most imaginative
practical	(adj.)	more practical	most practical
effectively	(adv.)	more effectively	most effectively
happily	(adv.)	more happily	most happily

When considering TECAT usage items, be on the lookout for comparative and superlative formation errors such as the following:

Incorrect: The Nile River is more longer than the Amazon River.
type of error: double comparative
(**Correct**: The Nile River is longer than the Amazon River.)

Incorrect: Robin is the most best speller in the class.
type of error: double superlative
(**Correct**: Robin is the best speller in the class.)

Incorrect: This hamburger tastes gooder than the one I ate last week.
type of error: irregular comparative formed as regular
(**Correct**: This hamburger tastes better than the one I ate last week.)

Incorrect: That is the baddest movie I've ever seen.
type of error: irregular superlative formed as regular
(**Correct**: That is the worst movie I've ever seen.)

Incorrect: A forest is beautifuler than a desert.
type of error: multisyllabic modifier used with "-er" comparative form
(**Correct**: A forest is more beautiful than a desert.)

Incorrect: He's the intelligentest person I know.
type of error: multisyllabic modifier used with "-est" superlative form
(**Correct**: He's the most intelligent person I know.)

Remember, the comparative form is used only to compare two things, while the superlative form is used to compare more than two. Consider the following errors:

Incorrect: Tom is shortest than you are.
type of error: superlative used to compare two people
(**Correct**: Tom is shorter than you are.)

Incorrect: Of my three sisters, Lisa is the more adventurous.
type of error: comparative used to compare three people.
(**Correct**: Of my three sisters, Lisa is the most adventurous.)

HOMONYM SELECTION

The last category of English usage deals with homonyms. Homonyms are words which, though spelled differently, sound the same. For example, "missed" and "mist" sound alike, yet it would be an error to say, "I was 10 minutes late, so I mist my plane." Most of us are familiar with a fair number of common homonyms such as "meet" and "meat." We realize that we buy steaks at a meat market, but meet a friend at the ice rink.

TECAT English usage items dealing with homonym selection will represent clear misuses of the homonyms involved. Here, for example, are some correct and incorrect sentences involving homonyms.

Incorrect: Are their any old towels in your locker?
Correct: Are there any old towels in your locker?

Incorrect: The heard of cattle was grazing in the hills.
Correct: The herd of cattle was grazing in the hills.

Incorrect: Please don't brake my new lamp.
Correct: Please don't break my new lamp.

Incorrect: I'm taking a coarse in photography.
Correct: I'm taking a course in photography.

Other words are frequently confused because they are near-homonyms. Consider the following examples:

Incorrect: I fear that our team will loose this game.
Correct: I fear that our team will lose this game.

Incorrect: We had apple pie for desert.
Correct: We had apple pie for dessert.

Look at the following examples of homonym and near-homonym pairs/groups. If you are unsure about the different meanings of any of these words, look them up in a dictionary or English composition textbook.

affect/effect
brake/break
capital/capitol
choose/chose
coarse/course
complement/compliment
council/counsel
councilor/counselor
desert/dessert
formally/formerly
hear/here
lead/led
loose/lose
passed/past
peace/piece
personal/personnel
plain/plane
principal/principle
quiet/quite
stationary/stationery
than/then
there/their/they're
to/too/two
waist/waste
weather/wether

When reading TECAT English usage items, **read carefully** as you look for errors in agreement, verb tense, pronoun usage, adjective/adverb usage, and homonym selection.

Sample Items

Read this selection, paying careful attention to word usage.

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Charlie:

[2] Dr. Winthrop, a professor at Baylor University, has asked me to survey teachers regarding the use of behavioral objectives in the classroom. [3] He will be presenting a paper on the subject for a statewide conference in August. [4] Would you be interested in assisting me with this project? [5] Dr. Winthrop will give credit to you and I on the final manuscript.

[6] Sincerely,

[7] Dorothy Powell

1. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

A Part [2]

B Part [3]

C Part [5]

D None of the above

This item asks you to identify where, if at all, an error in English usage exists in this communication. Read the selection carefully. Try to locate a usage error. If, on first reading, the entire passage seems to be written according to standard American English usage conventions, reread it until you either locate a usage or are confident that the communication has no such errors.

The correct answer for this sample item is C, "Part [5]." The pronoun "I," which is a subject pronoun, is used as an object of a preposition in the phrase "to you and I." This phrase should be written, "to you and me."

Answers A, "Part [2]," and B, "Part [3]," are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences do not contain usage errors. They are both written correctly. Answer D, "None of the above," is also incorrect because, as we have seen, the communication contains a pronoun usage error.

Adapted from a letter to a colleague:

[1] Dear Ms. Vernon:

[2] I saw your note asking me to administer an examination to Bill Carson. [3] Unfortunately, Bill were absent from school today. [4] I left the test in your top drawer under the roll book. [5] There is the possibility that another substitute teacher will replace me tomorrow if you are still unable to return. [6] I will leave your instructions regarding Bill's test for the new substitute teacher.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Walter Hillary
[9] Substitute Teacher

2. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

A Part [3]

B Part [4]

C Part [5]

D None of the above

This communication contains a verb usage error in Part [3]. Therefore, answer A is the correct answer choice. The verb "were" is plural. It does not agree in number with its subject, "Bill." Sentence [3] should say, "Unfortunately, Bill was absent from school today."

Answers B, "Part [4]," and C, "Part [5]," do not have usage errors and are, therefore, incorrect. Answer D, "None of the above," is also incorrect because the communication contains a verb usage error.

PRACTICE TEST FOR ENGLISH USAGE

On the following page you will find a practice test. Answer each item. When you have completed all five items, check your answers on page 68. If you miss any items, read why the answer you chose was incorrect.

Adapted from a letter to a public official:

[1] Dear Councilmember Valdez:

[2] I agree with your's outspoken view about litter in our city. [3] Recently, the litter problem at our school has increased dramatically. [4] We would like you to speak to our students because we believe you can be an inspiration to them. [5] Educating the youth about this problem is the first step in fostering conscientious adults. [6] Thank you for considering this request.

[7] Respectfully,

[8] Janet Bennett
[9] Principal
[10] Castle Jr. High School

1. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

   A Part [2]

   B Part [4]

   C Part [5]

   D None of the above

Adapted from a memorandum to a colleague:

[1] To: Ms. Povich, Principal
[2] From: Carl Simpson, Teacher
[3] Subject: Last Night's PTA Meeting

[4] I'm sorry you were unable to attend last night's PTA meeting. [5] The parents, led by Ms. Grant, opposes closing the school grounds on weekends. [6] They argued that the children have nowhere else to play team sports such as kickball. [7] The teachers who attended agreed to bring this issue to your attention.

2. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

   A Part [4]

   B Part [5]

   C Part [6]

   D None of the above

Adapted from a memorandum to a colleague:

[1] To: Ms. Esposito
[2] From: Mr. Gray, Teacher
[3] Subject: Eddy Robinson

[4] Eddy Robinson is enrolled in my algebra class. [5] However, I suspect that he does not have the preparation necessary for this course. [6] Eddy received a very low score on a test that covered essential skills for beginning algebra students. [7] I would like to refer Eddy to you for counseling. [8] Please review his cumulative file, and direct him to a more appropriate mathematics class.

3. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

   A Part [5]

   B Part [6]

   C Part [8]

   D None of the above

Adapted from a memorandum to a colleague:

[1] To: Marge O'Conner
[2] From: Sam Valdez, Teacher
[3] Subject: Testing

[4] I was very concerned about how disorganized the standardized aptitude testing procedures were last week. [5] Insufficient materials were provided, and some teachers were late getting there classes to the testing room. [6] Several teachers felt unnecessary pressure when the test booklets arrived 15 minutes after the test was to begin. [7] I hope these problems can be avoided in the future.

4. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [4]
- **B** Part [5]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

Adapted from a letter to parents:

[1] Dear Mr. and Mrs. Caplan:

[2] Billy did not turn in any of his homework during the past week. [3] Him and I have discussed this matter, but it did not help. [4] His failure to turn in required homework is adversely affecting his grades. [5] I would like to discuss this problem with you. [6] I am sure that we can encourage Billy to resume good work habits if we work toward this goal together.

[7] Sincerely,

[8] Ben Santiago
[9] Teacher
[10] Madison Jr. High School

5. In which part of this communication, if any, is there an error in **English usage**?

- **A** Part [3]
- **B** Part [4]
- **C** Part [6]
- **D** None of the above

ANSWER KEY AND ANSWER ANALYSIS

The correct answers to the practice test for English usage are: No. 1: A, No. 2: B, No. 3: D, No. 4: B, No. 5: A.

In item 1, the possessive pronoun "your" is written incorrectly as "your's" in part [2]. Possessive personal pronouns ("my," "your," "yours," "his," "hers," "its," "our," "ours," "their," and "theirs") never contain an apostrophe. The correct answer, therefore, is answer A, "Part [2]." Answers B, "Part [4]," and C, "Part [5]," are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences are free of usage errors. Answer D, "None of the above," is also incorrect because the communication contains an error in possessive pronoun formation.

Item 2 contains a usage error in subject-verb agreement. Answer B, "Part [5]," is the correct answer choice because the verb in that sentence, "opposes," is singular, but the subject of the sentence, "parents," is plural. Do not be confused by the interrupting phrase, "led by Ms. Grant"; the verb refers to the subject that comes before this phrase, not to "Ms. Grant." Answers A and C are incorrect answer choices because Parts [4] and [6], respectively, do not contain usage errors. Answer D, "None of the above," is an incorrect answer choice because the communication contains an English usage error, specifically, in subject-verb agreement.

The correct answer choice for item 3 is D, "None of the above," because the communication does not contain any usage errors. Before you select "None of the above" as your answer, be certain to read the communication very carefully and slowly, making certain that no errors are present. Pay particular attention to the three parts identified in the answer choices. Although the communication should also be free of errors in sentence formation and mechanics, do not get side-tracked by looking for errors in the other areas when you are specifically asked to look for an English usage error.

Item 4 contains a homonym error. The correct answer is B, "Part [5]," because the possessive pronoun "their" is written as its homonym "there." "There" refers to a place or location and, thus, is not properly used in this sentence. Answers A and C are incorrect answer choices because these parts of the communication do not contain usage errors. Answer D, "None of the above," is also incorrect because of the error in Part [5]. If you chose answer D, you may have simply read the passage too quickly and seen the phrase "some teachers were late getting there," without realizing that a possessive pronoun was needed to link "teachers" to "classes." This clause should say, "some teachers were late getting their classes to the testing room." You should note that sounding out this sentence is not enough; you need to check that the written form of every word is correct.

Item 5 contains an error in pronoun usage. The correct answer choice is A, "Part [3]." The corresponding sentence uses the object pronoun "him" where the subject pronoun "he" is required. Answers B and C are incorrect answer choices because the corresponding sentences contain no usage errors. Answer D, "None of the above," is an incorrect answer choice because of the pronoun usage error in Part [3].

Summary

English usage is a relatively complex skill that requires careful attention to detail. Often our speech patterns are more informal than is acceptable in standard English writing. Thus, as writers, we need to pay careful attention to the way we use the basic structural elements of language and to proper homonym selection.

When approaching a TECAT English usage item, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Read the passage** slowly and carefully. Pay close attention to how words are used. Look for an error in English usage.
2. **Read the answer choices.** If you believe you have located a usage error in the communication, see if the part in which you found the error is designated by an answer choice. If not, **reread the parts of the communication that are listed in the answer choices.** Study these sentences carefully. Look for an error in word usage, paying particular attention to verb forms, pronoun forms, and homonyms.
3. **Select an answer choice.** If you have located a usage error, choose the answer (A, B, or C) that corresponds to the part of the communication containing the error. If you feel confident that no usage error exists in the communication, select answer choice D, "None of the above."

COMPOSITION

As has been indicated previously, preparation of a composition is the most important way in which examinees are asked to demonstrate their writing skills. Because the ability to create an acceptable written communication is a critical skill for a Texas educator, the composition component of the TECAT is the primary determinant of whether an examinee passes the TECAT Writing Section.

How the Skill is Measured

To assess writing skills in the composition section of the TECAT, examinees are provided with two different writing assignments of which they are to respond to **one**. The assignments will come from two of the following categories:

— letters to parents
— memoranda/letters to colleagues
— letters of recommendation
— letters to community organizations
— reports/articles about class, club, or school activities
— letters to request job application materials or to apply for an education-relevant position

Your response must be in English and should contain approximately 150 words. Examinees' responses are scored on the bases of mechanics, sentence formation, word usage, and organization.

As described earlier, compositions will be assigned scores of 1, 2, or 3 according to the scheme presented below:

Score	Status
1	Pass
2	Depends on performance on multiple-choice writing items
3	Fail

Responses are scored holistically by trained readers who will use the following scoring criteria:

- **Legibility:** The composition must be written neatly enough to be read. It can be written in a printed or cursive form.
- **Length:** Compositions should be about 150 words long. Shorter compositions will be graded more stringently.
- **Mechanics:** Proper capitalization, punctuation, and spelling must be used.
- **Sentence Formation:** Structurally complete sentences should be used instead of sentence fragments, run-on sentences, improperly coordinated/subordinated sentences, or sentences with missing words. Examinees need not vary the type of sentences they use. (In other words, you need not use both simple and compound sentences.)
- **Word Usage:** Compositions should embody subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement; grammatically and logically correct nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs; and a vocabulary appropriate for the audience specified in the assignment.
- **Organization:** The composition must respond to the assignment selected. It should also contain an introduction, adequate transitions between ideas, and a conclusion.

If you wish to see how these criteria have been applied in the grading of illustrative papers, consult *Passing Standards: Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers*, a booklet that was distributed statewide to Texas educators early in 1986. As described in that document, both the **number of errors** and how serious they are affect whether a response is judged to be a 1, 2, or 3.

Skill Analysis

Writing is a multi-staged activity. For a good writer, much goes on before pencil first meets paper, and much more occurs after the paper is initially filled with words. Writing should be thought of as a process consisting of three stages, **pre-writing**, **writing**, and **revision**. It is important to focus on each of these stages when writing an acceptable composition.

Pre-Writing. Before starting a composition, a writer typically needs to consider the **audience**, **purpose**, and **content** for that composition. In the TECAT, the audience, purpose, and general content focus will be provided in each of the two writing assignments. However, you will need to select, from the two choices, the topic about which you feel most comfortable writing. This choice should be made on the basis of your familiarity with the audience, purpose, and content focus described in the assignment. The composition you prepare must be responsive to the specific assignment you select. Once you have made your selection, stick with it. Do not spend your time going back and forth between the two choices. The next part of this phase should consist of preparing notes or a tentative outline of what you will be writing. During the pre-writing phase, you should consider these three issues:

- What is the main **point** of the composition?
- What facts, situations, or content **support** that point?
- What is the most logical **order** in which to present this information?

The amount of time required for pre-writing varies greatly. Keep in mind that during the TECAT you will probably only want to leave a few minutes for pre-writing so that you have adequate time to write and revise your composition. However, you should be certain to address these three questions before you begin writing. After a brief preliminary plan or outline has been developed, you are ready to begin the second stage in the composition process.

Writing. A communication takes form during the writing phase. While you are writing, be certain to use the notes that you prepared during pre-writing. Use scratch paper to write a rough draft. Keep moving during the writing process. Do not stop to rewrite sentences; you will have time to do this during the revision stage.

In general, try to keep your sentences and vocabulary as simple as possible. If you are unsure about the proper punctuation of a complex sentence, try to find a simpler way to make the same point. A dictionary will be available so that you can look up the spelling of a word if you are unsure about how it is spelled. Follow your pre-writing materials to make certain that you present your ideas clearly and in a logical order. The composition should contain an introduction, an elaboration of ideas, and a conclusion. In addition, it is important to provide logical transitions between ideas. Your composition should move along smoothly from one idea to another, from beginning to end.

As you write your composition, underline any words for which you are even somewhat unsure of the spelling. Go back when you finish writing and look up the spelling of those words. Using a dictionary is the best way to avoid spelling errors.

When this first draft is completed, you are ready to begin the revision phase.

Revision. After completing the first draft of a composition, reread that draft slowly and carefully. Check that the composition is consistent with the purpose, audience, and content specified in the assignment. Does your composition clearly communicate the point(s) you are trying to make? Has sufficient detail been provided to support the main point of your composition?

Next, focus on the composition's organization. Is there a clear introduction and conclusion? Is there a smooth transition between ideas?

Finally, check your composition for any errors in mechanics (spelling, capitalization, or punctuation), sentence formation, or English usage. Much of the information presented during the consideration of the multiple-choice writing items is equally important in writing an acceptable composition. For example, the rules for punctuation and capitalization should certainly be followed in your composition, as should the guidelines associated with sentence formation and English usage. Mark any errors you find so that you can correct them in your final draft. When all these reviews have been accomplished and you are satisfied that the composition has been revised to communicate clearly and effectively, the revision process will be completed.

Final Suggestions

People often make careless spelling mistakes when they write. Such mistakes can be detected if you take the time to read your composition carefully after it is completed. Unlike the multiple-choice items, for which no dictionary is available, dictionaries will be available as you complete your TECAT compositions. Thus, you will be able to check the spelling of words used in your composition. Also, check to make sure that your handwriting is clear. Poor handwriting may make it difficult to those who score your composition to see exactly what you intended to write. By rereading your composition, you should be able to correct any careless errors and make certain that your response can be read accurately.

If you use the scratch paper provided in your test booklet to write your first draft, edit that draft before you copy it on the answer folder. Count your words to make sure that your composition is approximately 150 words long. If your composition contains substantially less than 150 words, add to it. (If your composition contains more than 150 words, this will not be held against you when your composition is scored. Keep in mind, however, that words in excess of 150 increase your chances of making mistakes.) After you copy the edited version on the answer folder, be sure to reread the final composition to look for omitted words or even sentences. Careless mistakes such as these are common when copying a composition from one piece of paper to another.

Remember, you can take as much time as you need to write your composition. Take your time and work carefully, following the steps suggested above.

Sample Assignments and Responses

The final sections of the self-study guide provide writing assignments such as would be found on the TECAT. For **each** of the two assignments, a weak response to the assignment will be provided along with an indication of the problems in that composition. Finally, a corrected version of the composition (in which these problems have been eliminated) will be given.

Remember, during the actual TECAT administration you will select only **one** of the assignments. The two responses are provided here only to illustrate errors and how to eliminate them.

A pair of composition assignments are provided at the end of this guide so that you can practice preparing compositions. You may want to write a response to each assignment to get as much practice as you can. It may help you to ask a friend (who is a reasonably good writer) to go over both compositions with you according to the criteria for judging compositions presented on page 69.

Sample Essay Topics

On the TECAT examination, you will be presented with two such writing assignments. You will be asked to respond to **one** of them (your choice).

Two writing items that are similar to those appearing on the TECAT are presented below. Following each assignment is a weak response that contains a variety of errors. Try to identify and correct the errors in each response. This process should help you revise your own response to a writing assignment on the TECAT.

Following the weak response, a complete listing of the errors in the response is presented. Check the errors you identified against those in the list. Pay particular attention to those errors that you did not detect.

A corrected version of the response is presented following the list of errors.

Sample Writing Assignments

Read the two assignments presented below. Then, pick **one** assignment and prepare a response. Do not respond to both assignments.

1. Your school's annual Student Art Show will open next week. You have been active in setting up the exhibit and are impressed by the talents of this year's student artists. A variety of art forms and artistic styles are represented. Write an article for the school newspaper to describe the art show and encourage students and staff to visit the exhibit.

2. At the end of each academic year, the awards committee at your school presents a Student Progress Award to two or three students. These students must have made remarkable progress during the year, both academically and personally. You know a student who has not only worked to receive higher grades, but has also become more involved in the extracurricular activities. Write a letter to the awards committee recommending this student as a recipient of the Student Progress Award. Describe how the student has improved this year and why the student should receive the award.

Your response should be approximately 150 words and related to the assignment described above. It must be written in English. Responses will be scored on the basis of mechanics, sentence formation, word usage, and organization. You may write in cursive or print, but your writing must be legible. Scratch paper has been provided. Your final response, however, must appear on this test form.

Example of a Weak Response to Sample Writing Assignment 1

[1] This year's Student Art Show will open next week in Audubon hall. [2] Best in many years. [3] Many talented student artists have produced artwork for the exibit. [4] Sculpture pieces, drawings, paintings, and collages is on display.

[5] Some of the students who's creations are being shown are Alicia Mariposa, David Prowell, Martin Estevez, Jenny Seacliffe, and Nathan Hathaway. [6] These students, among others, have labored for many months in preperation for this annual springtime event. [7] I also attended an art show last year. [8] They have worked on there art pieces during and after school. [9] Our art teachers, Ms. Monet Mr. Adams, and Ms. Ortega, have also worked many extra hours on this worthwhile project.

[10] Please find some time to visit this truely impressive art show. [11] It will be open during the lunch period and after school until 4:30. [12] In addition, a grand opening celebration will be held next Monday, may 7, from 7:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. [13] Please encourage your parents to atend this special evening event. [14] Refreshments will be served, the artists will be on hand to discuss their work.

Errors (by sentence number) in Weak Response 1

[1] **Mechanics Error** (capitalization) — The word "hall" should be capitalized because it is part of a proper noun. Audubon Hall is the name of a specific location.

[2] **Sentence Formation Error** (sentence fragment) — This group of words contains no subject and no verb. Therefore, it cannot be a complete sentence.

[3] **Mechanics Error** (spelling) — The word "exhibit" is misspelled.

[4] **Word Usage Error** (subject-verb agreement) — The singular verb "is" disagrees in number with its subject ("Sculpture pieces, drawings, paintings, and collages"), which is clearly plural.

[5] **Word Usage Error** (pronoun usage) — The possessive pronoun "whose" is written incorrectly as the contraction "who's," which means "who is."

[6] **Mechanics Error** (spelling) — The word "preparation" is misspelled.

[7] **Organization Error** (sentence choice) — This sentence introduces an idea that does not belong in this paragraph.

[8] **Word Usage Error** (homonym selection) — The possessive personal pronoun "their" has been incorrectly written as its homonym "there."

[9] **Mechanics Error** (punctuation) — There should be a comma between "Ms. Monet" and "Mr. Adams," which are the first two items listed in a series.

[10] **Mechanics Error** (spelling) — The word "truly" is misspelled.

[11] No error.

[12] **Mechanics Error** (capitalization) — The word "may" should be capitalized because it is a proper noun, the name of a month.

[13] **Mechanics Error** (spelling) — The word "attend" is misspelled.

[14] **Sentence Formation Error** (run-on) — This group of words consists of two independent clauses that are improperly connected with only a comma. The clauses should be either (1) written as two separate sentences, or (2) connected with a conjunction preceded by a comma. As they stand, they form a run-on.

Corrected Version of the Sample Response 1

This year's Student Art Show will open next week in Audubon Hall. It is the best show I've seen in many years. Many talented artists have produced artwork for the exhibit. Sculpture pieces, drawings, paintings, and collages are on display.

Some of the students whose creations are being shown are Alicia Mariposa, David Prowell, Martin Estevez, Jenny Seacliffe, and Nathan Hathaway. These students, among others, have labored for many months in preparation for this annual springtime event. They have worked on their art pieces during art class and after school. Our art teachers, Ms. Monet, Mr. Adams, and Ms. Ortega, have also worked many extra hours on this worthwhile project.

Please find some time to visit this truly impressive art show. It will be open during the lunch period and after school until 4:30. In addition, a grand opening celebration will be held next Monday, May 7, from 7:30 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Please encourage your parents to attend this special evening event. Refreshments will be served, and the artists will be on hand to discuss their work.

Example of a Weak Response to Writing Assignment 2

Dear Awards Committee Members:

[1] That's why I think he should receive a Student Progress Award. [2] Daniel has worked very hard to improve he's grades. [3] Last year, he urned a D average. [4] Is B+ this year. [5] This is a rarely and worthy accomplishment.

[6] As important as Daniels academic progress is his development from a shy, angry boy to an outgoing, responsible young man. [7] He has made a reel effort to become involved in school activities and projects. [8] During April's "Spring Clean-up" project. [9] He organized the students who were responsible for removeing litter from our campus. [10] Daniel has also spended many hours after school and on weekends decorating for special school events. [11] He has shown great promise in sports this year, our coach, Mr. Weems, feels that Daniel will be a real asset to the soccer team next year. [12] Daniel's involvement in the peer counseling program. [13] Daniel have helped several troubled students to emerge as more stable and self-confident individuals.

[14] For these reasons, I highly recommend Daniel Valencia as a deserving recipient of the Student Progress Award.

Sincerely,

Carla Shepherd
Teacher
Westwind Jr. High School

Errors (by sentence number) in Weak Response 2

[1] **Organization Error** (sentence choice) — An introductory sentence is needed at the beginning of a letter; this sentence would be more appropriate as a conclusion.

[2] **Word Usage Error** (pronoun formation) — The third-person singular possessive pronoun "his" is mistakenly written as "he's."

[3] **Mechanics Error** (spelling) — The word "earned" is misspelled.

[4] **Sentence Formation Error** (sentence fragment) — This group of words contains no subject; it is a predicate standing alone and is, therefore, a sentence fragment.

[5] **Word Usage Error** (adjective/adverb use) — The adverb "rarely" has been incorrectly used to modify the noun "accomplishment." The adjective "rare" is needed.

[6] **Mechanics Error** (punctuation) — An apostrophe is needed in the possessive form "Daniel's."

[7] **Word Usage Error** (homonym choice) — The adjective "real" has been mistakenly written as its homonym, "reel."

[8] **Sentence Formation Error** (sentence fragment) — This group of words is a prepositional phrase, which cannot stand alone as a sentence. It is actually an introductory phrase that should end with a comma and continue with the following sentence.

[9] **Mechanics Error** (spelling) — The word "removing" is misspelled.

[10] **Word Usage Error** (verb formation) — The irregular past participle "spent" has been formed as though it were regular.

[11] **Sentence Formation Error** (run-on) — This group of words consists of two independent clauses that are improperly connected with only a comma. The clauses should be either (1) written as two separate sentences or (2) connected with a conjunction preceded by a comma. As they stand, they form a run-on.

[12] **Sentence Formation Error** (sentence fragment) — This group of words contains no verb. It is a subject with no predicate and is, therefore, a sentence fragment.

[13] **Word Usage Error** (subject-verb agreement) — The verb "have helped" disagrees with its subject, "Daniel."

[14] No error.

Corrected Version of the Sample Response 2

Dear Awards Committee Members:

The purpose of this letter is to recommend Daniel Valencia as a recipient of one of this year's Student Progress Awards. Daniel has worked very hard to improve his grades. Last year, he earned a D average. His average this year is B+. This is a rare and worthy accomplishment.

As important as Daniel's academic progress is his development from a shy, angry boy to an outgoing, responsible young man. He has made a real effort to become involved in school activities and projects. During April's "Spring Clean-up" project, he organized the students who were responsible for removing litter from our campus. Daniel has also spent many hours after school and on weekends decorating for special school events. He has shown great promise in sports this year. Our coach, Mr. Weems, feels that Daniel will be a real asset to the soccer team next year. Perhaps the most commendable of all is Daniel's involvement in the peer counseling program. Daniel has helped several troubled students to emerge as more stable and self-confident individuals.

For these reasons, I highly recommend Daniel Valencia as a deserving recipient of the Student Progress Award.

Sincerely,

Carla Shepherd
Teacher
Westwind Jr. High School

PRACTICE ESSAY TOPICS

This section provides an opportunity for you to practice responding to two writing assignments similar to those appearing on the TECAT. Remember, on the actual examination you will only respond to **one** of the two assignments provided. (For practice, however, you may wish to respond to both of the following items.)

Take no more than 50 minutes to prepare your response to each of the writing assignments provided below. Proofread your response for errors. Use a dictionary when necessary. When you have completed your response, you may want to ask a friend to help you find additional errors that you may have missed.

Read the two assignments provided below. Then, pick **one** assignment and prepare a response. Do not respond to both assignments.

1. Your class has been studying various forms of animal life. You would like to take your students on a field trip to the zoo. To maximize learning, you would like your students to be divided into groups of 10-15, each of which would be provided with a tour guide. Write a letter to the tour director at the zoo. Describe your students, what they have been learning, and what you would like them to learn at the zoo. Propose a tentative schedule and provide the information necessary for the tour director to organize your visit.

2. The students at your school have organized a talent show. A special evening performance has been scheduled for parents. The admission fee of $2.00 will go toward the purchase of a new set of encyclopedias for the library. Write a letter to the parents of the students at your school. Describe the talent show and its purpose. Urge the parents to show their support by attending the evening performance.

Your response should be approximately 150 words and related to the assignment described above. It must be written in English. Responses will be scored on the basis of mechanics, sentence formation, word usage, and organization. Letter format conventions (such as a salutation) may be used but will not be scored. You may write in cursive or print, but your writing must be legible. Scratch paper has been provided. Your final response, however, must appear on this test form.

Summary

To conclude, there are several things you can do to improve your written communications:

1. **Plan**. Make sure that you understand the writing assignment. Then plan what you want to say before you start writing. If you have been asked to accomplish a specific purpose, decide on your entire answer before you begin. Take some brief notes to remind yourself on key points, specific examples, and the natural order in which you want to present the information. Make certain that your response is relevant to the specific writing assignment.
2. **Write**. Use your notes to write a draft response. Include an introduction, a conclusion, and appropriate transitions between ideas. Write clearly and to the point. Avoid awkward phrases or sentence constructions that may lead to errors in mechanics. Use a dictionary to look up the spelling of any word about which you are uncertain. Write in complete sentences and follow the conventions of standard English usage.
3. **Revise and Edit**. When you finish your response, carefully check your paper, looking for problems in mechanics (punctuation, spelling, capitalization), sentence formation, word usage, or organization. Finally, make certain that your handwriting is clear. Responses that are written neatly are less likely to contain unintended errors.

CONCLUSION

Whether you have read one or both of the sections in this self-study guide, we hope that you now have a better understanding of each of the TECAT objectives you examined. If you are still having difficulty grasping the concepts in a particular skill area, reread that part of the guide at some later time. You may find that a fresh reading of the material will bring to light ideas that were previously difficult to understand.

Now that you have been formally introduced to the specific TECAT objectives, you should be able to face them with renewed confidence when you retake the TECAT examination. If you read this guide to improve your general reading and writing skills, we hope that you have benefited from the practice and review instruction provided in this self-study guide.

APPENDIX

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

REGION I **Co. Dist. No.**
108-950
Mr. Lauro Guerra
Region I Education Service Center
1900 West Schunior
Edinburg, Texas 78539
Telephone: (512) 383-5611

REGION II
178-950
Mr. Gerald Cook
Region II Education Service Center
209 North Water Street
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401
Telephone: (512) 883-9288

REGION III
235-950
Dr. Dennis Grizzle
Region III Education Service Center
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Victoria, Texas 77901
Telephone: (512) 573-0731

REGION IV
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Location: 7200 West Tidwell
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Region VI Education Service Center
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Huntsville, Texas 77340
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Region VIII Education Service Center
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Mt. Pleasant, Texas 75455
Telephone: (214) 572-8551

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Region IX Education Service Center
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Wichita Falls, Texas 76305
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Region X Education Service Center
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3001 North Freeway
Fort Worth, Texas 76106
Telephone: (817) 625-5311

REGION XII
161-950
Mr. Weldon O. Mills
Region XII Education Service Center
P.O. Box 1249
Waco, Texas 76703
Location: 401 Franklin Avenue
Telephone: (817) 756-7529

REGION XIII
227-950
Dr. Joe Parks
Region XIII Education Service Center
7703 North Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78752
Telephone: (512) 458-9131

REGION XIV
221-950
Dr. Thomas Lawrence
Region XIV Education Service Center
Route 1, P.O. Box 70A
Abilene, Texas 79601
Location: 1850 State Highway 351
Telephone: (915) 676-8201

REGION XV **Co.-Dist. No.**
226-950
Mr. Clyde Warren
Region XV Education Service Center
P.O. Box 5199
San Angelo, Texas 76902
Location: 612 South Irene St. 76903
Telephone: (915) 658-6571

REGION XVI
188-950
Dr. Kenneth Laycock
Region XVI Education Service Center
P.O. Box 30600
Amarillo, Texas 79120
Location: 1601 South Cleveland
Telephone: (806) 376-5521

REGION XVII
152-950
Region XVII Education Service Center
4000 22nd Place
Lubbock, Texas 79410
Telephone: (806) 792-4000

REGION XVIII
165-950
Dr. J.W. Donaldson
Region XVIII Education Service Center
P.O. Box 6020
Midland, Texas 79701
Location: LaForce Boulevard
Telephone: (915) 563-2380

REGION XIX
071-950
Dr. John E. Uxer
Region XIX Education Service Center
P.O. Box 10716
El Paso, Texas 79997
Location: 6611 Boeing Drive
Telephone: (915) 779-3737

REGION XX
015-950
Dr. Judy Castleberry
Region XX Education Service Center
1314 Hines Avenue
San Antonio, Texas 78208
Telephone: (512) 271-7611